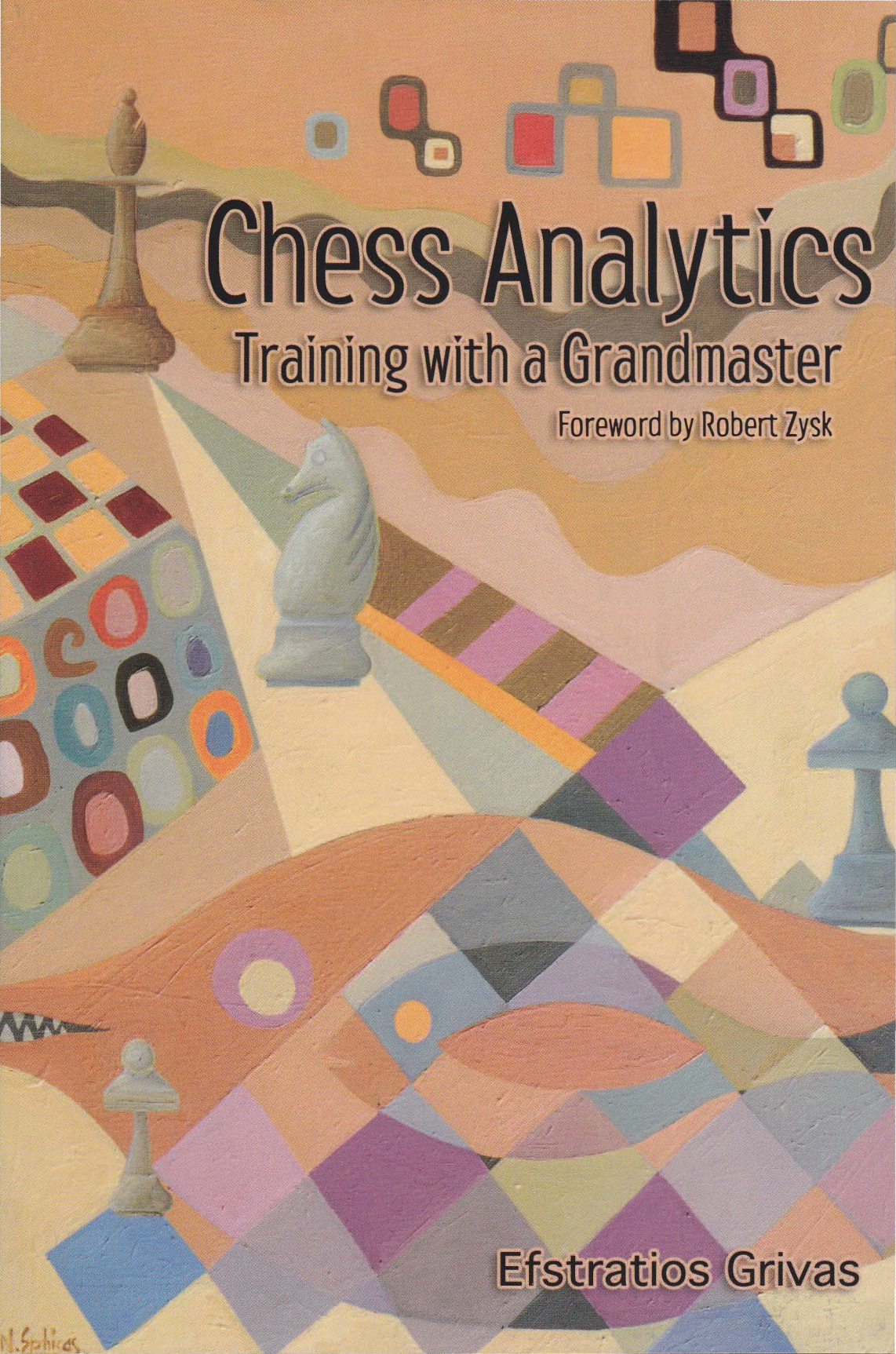
Chess Analytics
Training with a Grandmaster
Foreword by Robert Zysk
Efstratios Grivas

Chess Analytics

Training with a Grandmaster

by

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Foreword by Robert Zysk

2012
Russell Enterprises, Inc.
Milford, CT USA

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Training with a Grandmaster
by Efstratios Grivas

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ISBN: 978-1-936490-41-7

Published by:
Russell Enterprises, Inc.
PO Box 3131
Milford, CT 06460 USA

http://www.russell-enterprises.com
info@russell-enterprises.com

Cover design by Nicolas Sphicas with Janel Lowrance

Printed in the United States of America

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Foreword

Why do we read a chess book? There are mainly two reasons: we seek entertainment and we want to improve our play.

While certainly entertaining, this book is clearly dedicated to the ambitious player who has reached a certain level and wants to improve even further.

You want to advance from a medium player to a stronger player, from a strong player to a master? Well, you have made an excellent choice.

Based on the analysis of high level games you will be presented with and have explained (this is something that your chess engine won't do for you!) important middlegame and endgame patterns, winning strategic plans, and typical mistakes. Several personal remarks about the author's and his students' tournament practice add another dimension, as you get an idea about the emotions involved in a tournament game.

There is a broad range of the subjects which are covered. You will find well-known subjects like back rank mate combinations, chapters about isolated pawns, strong squares, etc., as well as less commonly presented patterns, such as the chapters "False Guards" or "The King's Golden Cage." The guiding principle of these themes is their practical value. This is particularly true in the endgame section where the author deals with structures which occur relatively often but are rarely presented in chess literature.

The structure of each chapter is clear and methodical. The concept is explained in a few lines and illustrated in carefully selected, annotated master games. A conclusion with practical hints rounds off each section.

Working through the book will increase your general understanding of chess. Thus your progress will be permanent and sustainable. Unlike opening theory which is subject to rather dramatic changes in a relatively short period, the principal rules of chess strategy have remained the same over time.

Personally, I particularly enjoyed the chapters about "Dancing Knights" and "Decisive Games" and the entire section about endings. Yes, sometimes you will need to go through a lot of analysis in this section but there is a good chance that this work will bring you the desired extra half-point in your tournament games.

Some remarks about your author. I have known and have been good friends with Efstratios (Stratos) Grivas now for 30 years. He is a grandmaster and by definition an excellent player. But more importantly for you he is one of the world's leading chess trainers, one of those who can help you to become a grandmaster. (Well, I do admit that achieving that goal takes more than reading one book. It takes talent, time and tournament practice and... some luck!)

Having been "brought up" as a chessplayer by leading trainers of the Eastern European Chess School, he has devoted almost two decades of his life to chess training. Consequently he is now an executive member of the FIDE trainer's commission. This position compels him to travel a lot, giving classes to future FIDE Trainers.

Bottom line: you are in the safe hands of a real expert who is dedicated to chess training. That's the good news.

Now the bad news: buying Stratos' book and even reading it is not enough. You have to work with it, you have to play through the games, follow the analyses and understand the concepts presented to reap the real benefits. This means that you will have to spend time and effort. And, of course, you will need to play some tournaments to put into practice what you learned.

On the other hand, if you make that effort, you are almost sure to improve your success at chess substantially. And that's what you *really* want, right?

I sincerely wish to all of you that you will experience this effect!

International Master Robert Zysk
Germany
March 2012

The Middlegame

Pinning

Concept

The concept of pinning is a very simple one, as its definition is rather basic: the piece that is pinned cannot move either because it allows the opponent to win material or because it is simply forbidden to do so!

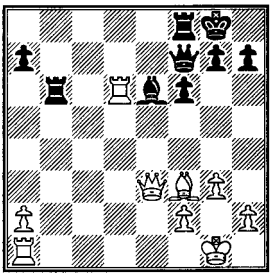
Pinning a piece is an everyday action during a chess game, but the question remains: how can we really benefit from a pin? Well, there are many ways but the most often met are:

(1) Instantly winning material;
(2) Long-term win of material;
(3) Disrupting the opponent's camp; and
(4) Help an attack or a defense.

Here we are going to see some examples that mostly deal with the second concept. We shall start with the long-term pinned rook concept and the way to benefit from it. The first game is a clear case of our theme:

(1) Sulava – Kryvoruchko
Calvi 2007
Queen's Gambit Declined [D41]

1.♘f3 c5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♘c6 4.g3 d5 5.d4 e6 6.c×d5 ♘×d5 7.♗g2 ♗e7 8.0-0 0-0 9.♘×d5 e×d5 10.d×c5 ♗×c5 11.♗g5 f6 12.♗d2 ♗e6 13.e3 d4 14.e×d4 ♘×d4 15.♗e3 ♘×f3+ 16.♕×f3 ♗×e3 17.♕×e3 ♕d7 18.♖fd1 ♕f7 19.♗×b7 ♖ab8 20.♗f3 ♖×b2 21.♖d6 ♖b6 (D)

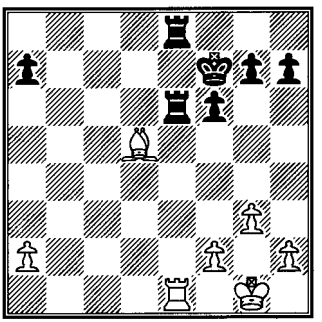


Black seemed to have everything under control, but he had missed a detail:

22.♕×e6! ♕×e6 23.♖×e6 ♖×e6 24.♗d5 ♖fe8

Or 24...♔f7 25.♖e1 ♖fe8.

25.♖e1 ♔f7 (D)



Of course Black had counted on that position, based on his ...f5 and ...♔f6 plan.

26.f4! f5

Or 26...g6 27.g4 f5 28.g5 +– .

27.g4! g6

27...♔f6 28.g5+

28.g5

And now Black can never unpin his rook without losing a great deal of material.

28...h5 29.♖e5! (D)

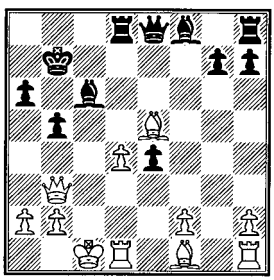
Preparing the white king's journey on the queenside.

29...♖8e7 30.♔f2 ♖e8 31.a4 ♖8e7 32.♔e3 ♖e8 33.♔d4 ♖8e7 34.♔c5 ♖c7+ 35.♔b5 ♖ce7 36.♗×e6+ ♖×e6 37.♖×e6 ♔×e6 38.♔a6 ♔d6 39.♔×a7 ♔c7 40.h4 ♔c6 41.♔b8 1-0

Black resigned as he will get the white a-pawn but in the meantime his opponent's king will penetrate on the kingside collecting the black pawns. Good chess games are divided in two main parts: the excellent and those which could be excellent if the most beautiful variations were actually played!

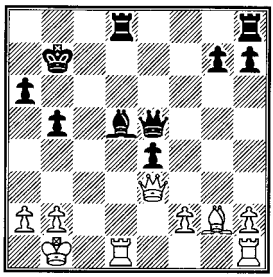
(2) Dautov – Krasenkow
Essen 2002
Dutch Defense [A84]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c6 4.e3 f5 5.g4 f×g4 6.♕×g4 ♘f6 7.♕g2 c5 8.♘f3 ♘c6 9.♗d2 ♗d7 10.0-0-0 ♕e7 11.♘e5 c×d4 12.e×d4 0-0-0 13.♗f4 ♕e8 14.c×d5 e×d5 15.♘×c6 ♗×c6 16.♕g3 b5 17.♗e5 ♔b7 18.♕d3 ♘e4 19.♘×e4 d×e4 20.♕b3 a6 (D)

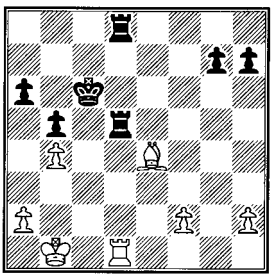


21.♗c4?

The game continuation has nothing to do with our theme, which is well-hidden somewhere in the analysis. So, White should continue with 21.♔b1! ♗d5 (21...e3 22.d5±) 22.♕e3 ♗d6?! (perhaps 22...♕f7! 23.♗g2! ♗×a2+ 24.♔a1 ♗d5 25.♗×e4 ♗×e4 26.♕×e4+ ♕d5 27.f3± is a better try for Black) 23.♗g2! ♗×e5 24.d×e5 ♕×e5 (D)



Now it looks like Black is in no danger, but... 25.♖×d5! ♖×d5 26.♕×e4 ♕×e4+ 27.♗×e4 ♖hd8 28.♖d1 ♔c6 29.b4 (D)



Black can only move his rook along the d-file, as he cannot break this nasty pin without losing material. White will bring his king to the kingside and advance his f- and h-pawns. At an appropriate moment the general exchange on d5 will liquidate into a winning pawn ending: 29...♖8d7 30.♖d4 ♖d8 31.♔c2 ♖8d7 32.♔d2 ♖d8 33.♔e3 ♖8d7 34.f4 g6 35.h4 ♖d8 36.h5 ♖8d7 37.a3 ♖d8 38.♔f3 ♖8d7 39.♔g4 ♖d8 40.♖×d5 ♖×d5 41.♗×d5+ ♔×d5 42.f5! and White wins the pawn ending.

21...e3! 22.♗f7?

Also bad is 22.d5? ♗d7 23.♗c3 e×f2∓ but White could go on with 22.♖he1! ♗f3 (22...e×f2 23.♖e2 ♖c8 24.♔b1=) 23.♖×e3 ♗×d1 24.♔×d1∞/=.

22...♗e4!!

22...♕e7? 23.f×e3 ♗×h1

24.♖×h1 ∞/=

23.♖d3

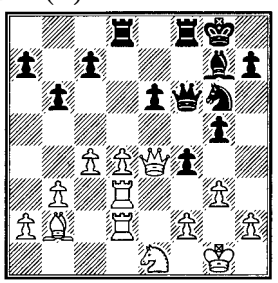
23.♗×e8 ♖c8+ 24.♕c3 ♖×c3+ 25.b×c3 ♗a3#

23...♕e7 24.♖c3 ♗×h1 25.♖c7+ ♕×c7+ 26.♗×c7 e×f2 0-1

When you miss such a good chance you shouldn't complain about your luck! In general pinned pieces are not usually rooks. Here the pinned piece is a bishop, but the main concept (exchange and penetrate with the king) remains the same:

(3) Polugaevsky – Kortschnoi
Evian 1977
Queen's Indian Defense [E19]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗b7 5.♗g2 ♗e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘c3 ♘e4 8.♕c2 ♘×c3 9.♕×c3 f5 10.b3 ♗f6 11.♗b2 ♘c6 12.♖ad1 ♘e7 13.♘e1 ♗×g2 14.♘×g2 g5 15.♕c2 ♘g6 16.e4 f4 17.e5 ♗g7 18.♕e4 ♕e7 19.♖d3 ♖ad8 20.♖e1 d5 21.e×d6 ♕×d6 22.♖ed1 ♕e7 23.♘e1 ♕f6 24.♖1d2 (D)



24...♕f5!

Black's strategy is impressive and would make Nimzowitsch really proud in terms of minorities, majorities and blockading!

25.♕×f5 e×f5!

That's the trick – Black's kingside majority will prove more dangerous than White's.

26.♘g2 g4 27.♘×f4 ♘×f4 28.g×f4 ♗h6 29.♖e2 ♗×f4 30.♖e6 ♖fe8 31.♖f6 ♖e1+ 32.♔g2 ♖f8!

Active pieces have to be exchanged!

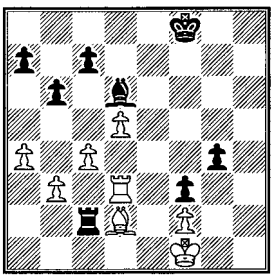
33.♖×f8+ ♔×f8 34.d5?!

This "kills" White's pawns – the a2-b3-c4-d5 chain cannot move any farther.

34...♗d6 35.♗c3 ♖c1 36.♗d2 ♖c2 37.a4 f4

But the black pawns can – White is in trouble.

38.h3 f3+ 39.♔f1 h5 40.h×g4 h×g4 (D)



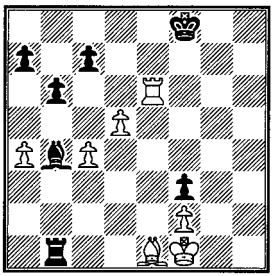
Time-trouble was over as the first time-control was reached. Here the game was adjourned and White sealed his move.

41.♔e1

It was still the era when adjournments were on the daily plate of every chessplayer along with the usual "horror night" of lengthy analysis was to follow. Nowadays, as a result of very strong analytical engines, adjournments are no longer useful since there is no need for "human" brain-work!

Returning to the game, when the extensive human analysis was quite convincing, Polugaevsky, seeing that he was easily lost after 41...♗c5 (*zugzwang*!) 42.b4 ♗d6, resigned. But our theme could be seen better after the

alternative 41.♖d4 ♖b2 42.♗e1 ♖×b3 43.♖×g4 when Black can pin the white bishop with 43...♖b1 44.♖e4 ♗b4 45.♖e6 (D)

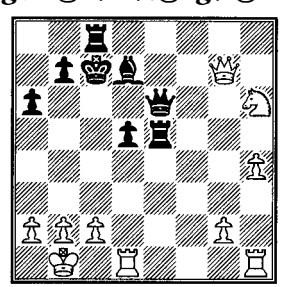


...and then proceed with the king as usual, 45...♔f7 46.♖e3 ♔g6 47.♖e6+ ♔f5 48.♖e3, liquating to a won pawn ending: 48...♖×e1+ 49.♖×e1 ♗×e1 50.♔×e1 ♔e4 **0-1**

Instances of various reciprocal pins are rare, but, here is a good example:

(4) Kritz – Kozul
Istanbul 2003
Sicilian Defense [B67]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♕d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♗d7 9.f3 ♖c8 10.♘×c6 ♗×c6 11.♔b1 ♗e7 12.h4 0-0 13.♘e2 d5 14.e5 ♘d7 15.f4 ♘c5 16.♘d4 ♖e8 17.♗d3 ♕b6 18.f5 ♘×d3 19.♕×d3 e×f5 20.♗×e7 ♖×e7 21.♘×f5 ♖×e5 22.♘h6+ ♔f8 23.♕×h7 ♗d7 24.♕g8+ ♔e7 25.♕×f7+ ♔d6 26.♕g6+ ♔c7 27.♕×g7 ♕e6 (D)

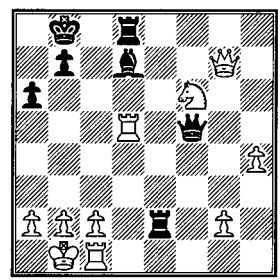


The hunt of the black king has resulted in a serious material advantage for White. But there are still some details to be taken care of.

28.♘g4! ♖e2 29.♘f6 ♕f5 30.♖c1

30.♕×d7+? ♕×d7 31.♘×d7 ♔×d7 32.♖×d5+ ♔e6 33.♖d4 ♖c×c2 34.♖e4+ ♖×e4 35.♔×c2 ♖e2+ 36.♔c3 ♖×g2 37.h5 ♔f7 is not so convincing. 30.♔a1! is equally strong: 30...♖×c2 31.♘×d5+ ♔b8 32.♘e3 and the double attack reveals the winner.

30...♖d8 31.♖hd1 ♔b8 32.♖×d5 (D)



32...♖×c2!

An excellent trap in White's serious time trouble. Although the text move also loses, it might shake White's confidence as he might have been expecting Black's resignation! The analysis is clear but in the real game anything could go wrong...

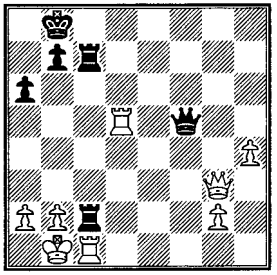
33.♘×d7+

33.♖×f5! also wins 33...♗×f5 34.♘e4! ♗×e4 35.♕e5+. But with the text move we will be able to have on our plate more pins yet to come! Double attack and pins are the beauty of chess!

33...♖×d7 34.♕g3+

Also good was 34.♖×f5 ♖×c1+ 35.♔×c1 ♖×g7 36.♖g5+-.

34...♖dc7 (D)



A bizarre position; almost all of the pieces are under attack, but the tension is resolved by a simple move:

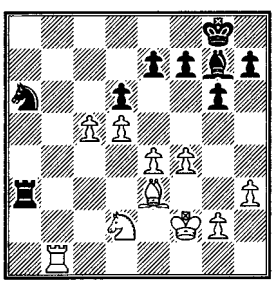
35.♕×c7+! 1-0

An "only move, but a move that is convincing enough, forcing Black to resign.

A pin is nearly always hard to meet. It can cause lethal problems; just have a look at the following game, where White pins various minor black pieces:

(5) Shamkovich – Soltis
Pasadena 1978
Modern Defense [A42]

1.d4 g6 2.e4 ♗g7 3.c4 d6 4.♘c3 c6 5.♗e3 a6 6.f4 b5 7.♘f3 ♘d7 8.d5 c5 9.c×b5 ♘gf6 10.♘d2 0-0 11.b×a6 ♘b6 12.♗e2 ♗×a6 13.♗×a6 ♖×a6 14.0-0 ♕d7 15.h3 ♖fa8 16.♕c2 ♘e8 17.a3 ♘c7 18.♖ab1 ♘a4 19.♘×a4 ♕×a4 20.♕×a4 ♖×a4 21.♖fc1 ♖b8 22.b4 ♖×a3 23.♔f2 ♘a6 24.b×c5 ♖×b1 25.♖×b1 (D)



25...d×c5?!

25...♘×c5 26.♖b8+ ♗f8 27.♗×c5 d×c5 28.♘c4 would offer White a clear advantage, but it was still preferable than the text move.

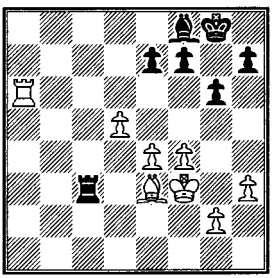
26.♖b7 ♗f8 27.♖a7

As now the usual pin is painful...

27...♖a4 28.♔f3 c4

Black decided to give up a pawn in order to break the pin. A waiting policy with 28...f6 29.g3 h5 30.e5 would not have been of any real help.

29.♘×c4 ♖×c4 30.♖×a6 ♖c3 (D)



31.♖a8!

But now the bishop is pinned!

31...♖b3 32.e5 f5 33.e6 ♖b7

Forced: 33...♖c3?! 34.d6+-.

34.♗d4 h6 35.h4 ♖b3+ 36.♔e2 ♖b7 37.♖c8

37.d6 e×d6 38.♗f6 would be equally strong.

37...♖b4?! 38.d6! 1-0

Conclusion

Pinned pieces are not our friends – we should try to avoid them as much as possible. Yes, there are exceptions but we usually only find out after the game – the risk is not "justified!"

Shattered Kingside Pawns

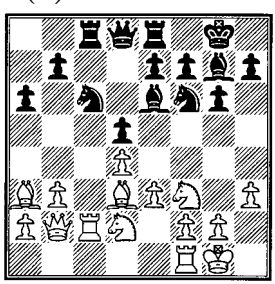
Concept

When the material gets quite limited and also it is "restrained" on one

part of the board the draw gets nearer. But this is not the case when there are weak and shattered pawns. This fact, in combination with the king's weakened position, could create insoluble problems for the weaker side; either he will lose material or just lose his king! In general, the weaker side should try to keep minor pieces on the board and avoid fighting against the major ones, especially against the combination of the queen and a rook – anything else is nearly acceptable. In this case of ♕+♖ vs. ♕+♖, the stronger side has every possibility to prevail, as the weaker side is usually restricted in its available counterplay. But let's examine a recent example:

(6) Topalov – Gashimov
Linares 2010
Slav Defense [D11]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 a6 5.♕c2 g6 6.♗d3 ♗g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♘bd2 ♘bd7 9.c×d5 c×d5 10.b3 ♘b8 11.♗a3 ♘c6 12.♖ac1 ♗e6 13.♕b2 ♖e8 14.h3 ♖c8 15.♖c2 (D)



White stands a somewhat better but has nothing really concrete yet.

15...♗f5

The text move changes the position, as Black spoils his pawn structure a bit in return for control over the e4-square.

16.♗×f5 g×f5 17.♘e1?!

17.♖fc1 ± was more natural, but White wanted to transfer his knight to d3.

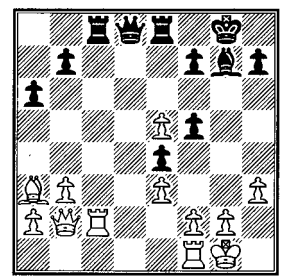
17...♘e4

Not bad, but Black could try 17...f4! 18.♘d3 (18.e×f4? ♘h5 19.♘df3 ♘×f4 ∓) 18...♘h5 ∞. Also, 17...e5 looks very anti-positional, but Black gets very active piece play after 18.d×e5 ♘×e5.

18.♘d3

Now White wants to continue with ♖fc1 and ♘f3-e5, increasing the pressure down the c-file, so Black must show some activity...

18...e5! 19.♘×e4 d×e4 20.♘×e5 ♘×e5 21.d×e5 (D)



21...♖×c2?!

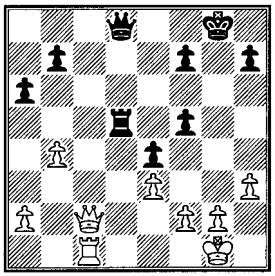
This is the start of a wrong plan. Black thought that it would be good to exchange bishops but this is a wrong attitude – without bishops Black's king will be vulnerable. Better was 21...♗×e5 22.♖×c8 ♕×c8 23.♕e2 f4! and equality cannot be far away.

22.♕×c2 ♕a5

22...♗×e5 23.♗b2 ♗×b2 24.♕×b2 doesn't change much.

23.♗d6! ♗×e5 24.b4 ♕d8 25.♗×e5 ♖×e5 26.♖c1 ♖d5 (D)

Although his pawn structure on the kingside is not ideal, Black seems to stand satisfactorily, as his control over the d-file should give him enough activity to keep the balance. But White can still look to the future as he has a clear target – the black pawn formation on the kingside.



27.a4

White could also consider 27.g3 h5 28.h4, but he wanted to keep open the option of an eventual ♔h2-g3. The "no-hurry" policy should be a guide in such positions.

27...b5?!

This actually leads to a very difficult position. 27...h5!? with the idea of ...h4 looks quite alright – Black would then have perpetual check in all queen endings.

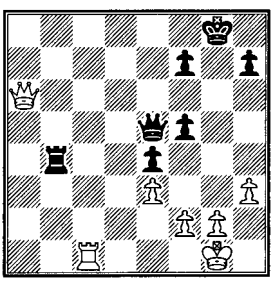
28.a×b5 ♖×b5

After 28...a×b5 29.g3 Black still has serious problems, as the b5- and f5-pawns are weak. With the text move, Black eliminates all queenside pawns and everything will be decided on the kingside.

29.♕a4 ♕d6 30.♕a1!

Forcing the exchanges on the queenside, in view of the back rank threats.

30...♕e5 31.♕×a6 ♖×b4 (D)



So, Black has exchanged off the queenside, but still problems exist – the remaining pawns are weak but so is the black king's position. By combining the threats on these two weaknesses, White can emerge with a material plus.

32.♕h6!

Now the f5-pawn is doomed and the e4-pawn will follow soon after.

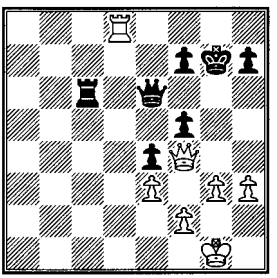
32...♖b8

The alternative was 32...♕e6 33.♕g5+ ♔f8(33...♕g6 34.♕d8+ ♔g7 35.♖c8 ♕a6 36.h4!+–) 34.♖d1 ♖b8 35.♕h4 h6 36.♕g3±.

33.g3 ♕e6 34.♕f4 ♖c8 35.♖d1

Probably more accurate was 35.♖a1 ♕d5 36.♕g5+ ♔f8 37.g4± but the text move should be also be sufficient.

35...♖c6 36.♖d8+ ♔g7 (D)



37.♔g2!

"Simply a useful move, the kind of move one makes automatically" as Veselin Topalov has asserted. Black is short of useful moves anyway and White once more follows the "no-hurry" policy.

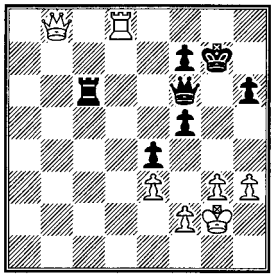
37...h6

Black wants to hide his king on h7. A waiting move like 37...♖b6 loses to 38.♕g5+ ♕g6 39.♕e7 ♕f6 40.♕f8+ ♔g6 41.h4! h5 and now White has to re-arrange his pieces: 42.♖d5 ♔h7 43.♖d7 ♔g6 44.♕c8 ♖c6 45.♕g8+ ♕g7 46.♕b8 ♕f6 47.♖d8±.

38.♕b8 ♕f6 (D)

Or 38...♕e7 39.♖h8! ♔g6 40.g4!

f×g4 41.♕g8+ ♔f5 42.h×g4+ ♔e5 43.♕b8+ ♔d5 (43...♕c7 44.♕b2+ ♔d5 45.♕d4+) 44.♖d8+ ♔c5 45.♖d1+–.



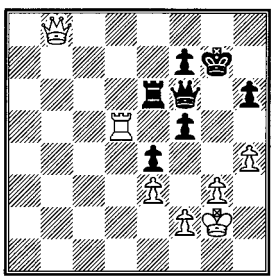
39.♖d5?!

A very strange decision. After 39.♖h8! the game should have ended very quickly.

39...♖e6

Black's problems are not over, as his weaknesses are permanent – White has simply wasted some time, but this does not change the evaluation of the position. 39...♕e6 40.♖e5 ♕f6 41.♖b5± was another option.

40.h4?! (D)



40.♕f4 ♔g6 41.h4± was more accurate – White is in a "no-hurry" position!

40...h5?

Black misses his last chance to try to survive in a difficult endgame after 40...f4! 41.♕×f4 ♕×f4 42.g×f4. Now White again wins easily.

41.♖d8!

The rook goes to g5, after which Black's defense will collapse.

41...♔h7 42.♖g8 f4

Or 42...♖b6 43.♕f8 ♖b7 44.♖g5+–.

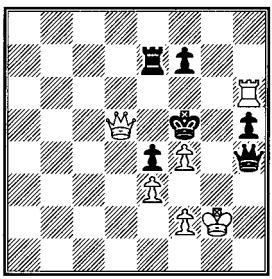
43.g×f4

43.♖g5! is a faster win.

43...♕×h4

43...♖d6 44.♖g5 ♖d8 45.♖×h5+ ♔g6 46.♕b5+–

44.♖h8+ ♔g6 45.♕g8+ ♔f6 46.♕d8+ ♖e7 47.♖h6+ ♔f5 48.♕d5+ 1-0 (D)

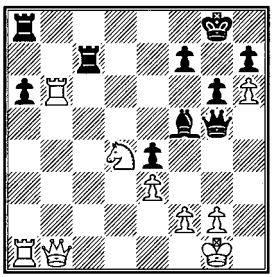


And Black resigned as 48...♔g4 will lead to mate in 9 after 49.f3+: 49...e×f3+ 50.♕×f3+ ♔f5 51.♕d5+ ♔g4 52.♕d1+ ♔f5 53.♕c2+ ♖e4 (53...♔g4 54.♖g6+!) 54.♕c5+ ♔g4 55.♖g6+! f×g6 56.♕c8+ ♖e6 57.♕×e6#.

Exactly a month later the following, very similar game, was played:

(7) Jobava – Almasi
Rijeka 2010
Queen's Indian Defense [E12]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.a3 ♗b7 5.♘c3 d5 6.c×d5 ♘×d5 7.♗d2 ♘d7 8.♕c2 c5 9.♘×d5 e×d5 10.d×c5 ♗×c5 11.e3 0-0 12.♗d3 ♘f6 13.0-0 ♘e4 14.♗b4 ♕e7 15.♗×c5 b×c5 16.b4 c×b4 17.a×b4 ♕×b4 18.♖fb1 ♕e7 19.♘d4 g6 20.♗×e4 d×e4 21.♕b3 ♖fc8 22.h4 ♖c7 23.h5 ♕g5 24.♕d1 a6 25.♖b6 ♗c8 26.♕b1 ♗f5 27.h6 (D)



Black stands slightly worse, as the d4-knight is a much stronger piece than the black bishop.

27...♖ac8?

But this is already a bad mistake. Black should opt for 27...♗d7 28.♕×e4 ♖e8 29.♕f4 ♕×f4 30.e×f4 ♗c8 when his chances to hold the game are very much increased.

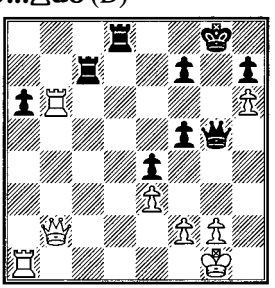
28.♘×f5 g×f5

Probably Black missed that he could not go in for 28...♕×f5?, as after 29.♕b2 ♖c3 30.♖b8 ♕c5 31.♖×c8+ ♕×c8 32.♖a3! ♖c1+ 33.♔h2 f6 34.♖b3 White wins. But now his kingside pawn structure is shattered...

29.♕b2!

And not 29.♖b×a6?! f4!, when Black is fine.

29...♖d8 (D)



30.♖b×a6?

But here White goes astray! He should first play 30.g3! ♖cd7 and only now 31.♖a×a6! ♕g4 32.♖d6 ♖×d6 33.♖×d6 ±, when "reflections" from the previous game are on the horizon...

30...♖cd7 31.g3 ♕g4!

Well played – Black has counterplay now.

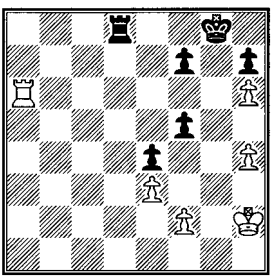
32.♕f6

There was nothing positive about 32.♖e1 ♖d1 33.♕c3 ♖×e1+ 34.♕×e1 f6 (34...♖d1?? 35.♖a8+) 35.♖a1 ♔f7 and Black holds.

32...♖d1+

Now a forced line begins:

33.♖×d1 ♕×d1+ 34.♔h2 ♕h5+ 35.♕h4 ♕×h4+ 36.g×h4 (D)



The ending should be drawn – White also has weaknesses now...

36...f4?!

Not yet the decisive mistake but simpler was 36...♔f8 37.♔g3 ♔e7=.

37.e×f4 ♔f8 38.♔g3 ♔e7 39.f5 ♖d3+?

Black, in time trouble, missed the fine drawing line 39...♖d6 40.♖a7+ (40.♖×d6 ♔×d6 41.♔f4 ♔d5=) 40...♔f6 41.♔f4 e3! 42.f×e3 ♖d4+! 43.♔g3 (43.e×d4 and 43.e4 ♖×e4+ 44.♔×e4 are just stalemating options!) 43...♖e4 44.h5 ♖×e3+ 45.♔f4 ♖e1 46.♖a6+ ♔e7 47.f6+ ♔d7 48.♖a7+ ♔e6 49.♖e7+ ♔×f6 50.♖×e1 stalemate!

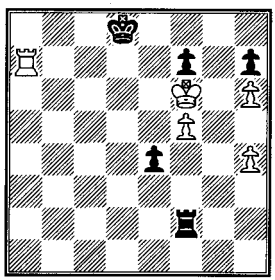
40.♔f4

Now White's active king wins the ending.

40...♖f3+

40...♖d2 41.♔e5 is no different.

41.♔e5 ♖×f2 42.♖a7+! ♔e8 43.♔f6 ♔d8 (D)



44.♖a4!

Placing the rooks behind the passed pawn assures the win, as the white king will be allowed to attack the enemy pawns with effect (44.♖e7?? ♖×f5+!−+).

44...e3 45.♖e4 e2 46.♔g7! ♖×f5 47.♖×e2 ♖f4 48.♔×h7 ♖g4

Or 48...♖×h4 49.♔g7 ♖g4+ 50.♔×f7 ♖f4+ 51.♔g6 ♖f1 52.♖e5+−.

49.♖e5 f6 50.♖e6 ♔d7 51.♖×f6 ♔e7 52.♖f5 ♖×h4

52...♔e6 53.♖g5

53.♔g6 1-0

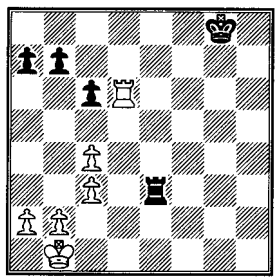
Well, winning a pawn in our cases doesn't guarantee an easy win, especially if these pawns are doubled. Here is another recent case, from the same tournament as the first example!

(8) Topalov – Gelfand

Linares 2010

Petroff Defense [C42]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘×e5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘×e4 5.♘c3 ♘×c3 6.d×c3 ♗e7 7.♗e3 0-0 8.♕d2 ♘d7 9.0-0-0 ♖e8 10.h4 c6 11.h5 h6 12.♔b1 ♘f6 13.♗d3 ♗f8 14.♖dg1 ♘g4 15.♗f4 ♕f6 16.♘h2 ♘×h2 17.♖×h2 ♗f5 18.♗×f5 ♕×f5 19.g4 ♕e4 20.g5 h×g5 21.♗×g5 ♕e2 22.♕×e2 ♖×e2 23.♗e3 ♖×e3 24.f×e3 ♖e8 25.♖h3 ♖e6 26.c4 ♗e7 27.♖f3 ♖e5 28.♖gf1 ♖×h5 29.♖×f7 ♖e5 30.♖7f3 ♗f6 31.c3 ♖e4 32.♖×f6 g×f6 33.♖×f6 ♖×e3 34.♖×d6 (D)



White's extra pawn is not significant, but of course Black has to be accurate.

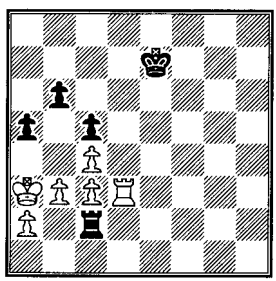
34...♔f7 35.♔c2 ♖e2+ 36.♔b3 ♔e7 37.♖d4 c5 38.♖d3 b6 39.♔a3 ♖c2 40.♖d5

Black's main problem is that his king is cut off and this causes his weakness.

40...a5!?

On one hand this move weakens Black's position further, but probably he was not fond of 40...♔e6?! 41.♖d8 ♖h2 42.b3 ♖g2 43.♖a8 ♖g7 44.♔a4± or 40...♔e8 41.♖h5, although in this line he can try 41...♖e2 – I doubt that White can win the pawn ending arising after 42.♖h7 ♖e7 43.♖×e7+ ♔×e7, for example, 44.♔a4 a6 45.♔b3 ♔d6 46.♔c2 ♔e5 47.♔d3 ♔f4.

41.♖d3 ♖h2 42.b3 ♖c2 (D)



43.♔a4

After some quiet moves White now plays his last trump.

43...♖×a2+ 44.♔b5 ♖b2

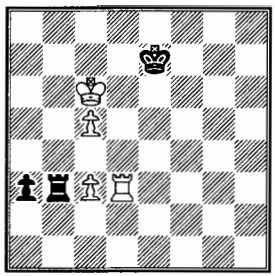
45.♔×b6 a4

45...♖×b3+ is not bad either, as the position after 46.♔×a5 ♔e6 47.♔a4 ♖b1 48.♖d5 ♔e7 49.♖×c5 ♔d6 is also a theoretical draw.

46.♔×c5 ♖×b3

46...a3! 47.♖d6 ♖×b3 48.♖a6 ♖×c3 was an easier draw.

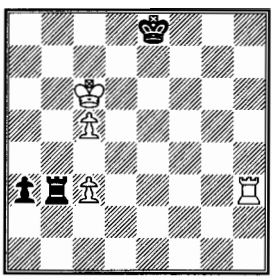
47.♔c6 a3 48.c5 (D)



48...♔e8?!

This may not be the losing move, but it is definitely a step in the wrong direction. 48...a2 49.♖d7+ ♔e6 50.♖a7 ♖b2 (50...♖×c3? 51.♖×a2+−) 51.♔c7 (51.c4 ♔e5 52.♖a4 ♖c2 53.♔d7 ♖d2+ 54.♔c7 ♔d4 55.c6 ♔c5=) 51...♔d5! 52.c6 ♔c4= was the most accurate way to draw. Alternatively, 48...♔e6?! 49.♖e3+ looks a bit odd, but 48...♔f6 was perfectly fine also.

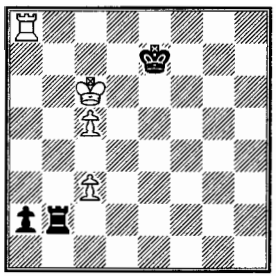
49.♖h3! (D)



49...a2?

But now this is the losing move. Black had to opt for 49...♔e7! when White's only chance is to sac the c3-pawn and push the other c-pawn. Black will then have to give up his rook, but by assisting his a-pawn with the king, he will save the day. A sample could be: 50.♖h8 ♖×c3 51.♖a8 ♔e6 52.♖a5 ♔e5 53.♔d7 ♔d4 54.c6 ♔c4 55.c7 ♔b3=.

50.♖h8+ ♔e7 51.♖a8 ♖b2 (D)

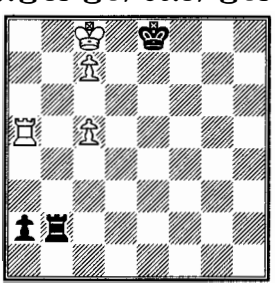


Black cannot save himself anymore: 51...♖×c3 52.♖×a2 ♔d8 53.♖a8+ ♔e7 54.♖c8 is a well-known winning method.

52.♔c7 ♖c2 53.c6 ♖b2 54.c4 ♖c2 55.♖a6 ♖b2 56.c5 ♔e6 57.♖a5! ♖c2 58.♔b7 ♖b2+

58...♖×c5 59.♖×a2+−

59.♔c8 ♔e7 60.c7 ♔e8 (D)



61.♖×a2!

A nice finishing touch. After 61.c6? ♔e7 62.♖a3!? ♔d6! (62...♔e8? 63.♖×a2 ♖×a2 64.♔b7 ♖b2+ 65.♔a6 ♖a2+ 66.♔b6 ♖b2+ 67.♔c5 ♖c2+ 68.♔d5 ♖d2+ 69.♔e5 ♖e2+ [69...♖d8 70.c×d8♕+ ♔×d8 71.♔d6+−] 70.♔f4 ♖f2+ 71.♔e3 and White wins. It is clear in this line why White inserted 62.♖a3!? ♔e8? – with the black king on e7, Black could have played 71...♖f8! here) 63.♔d8 ♖h2!= Black draws!

61...♖×a2 62.♔b7 1-0 and Black resigned as the c-pawn queens.

Conclusion

So, it looks like that the defending side should avoid situations like this. Keeping a minor piece on the board, or exchanging queens seems to be a plan to defend and share the point. Of course, it would be even better to avoid shattered and weak pawns in general!

The Weak d5-square

Concept

The element of the strong square (outpost) is one of the most often met in practice. The creation and occupation of an outpost plays a significant role in the course of many chess games.

An outpost is a square where we can place one of our pieces without it being attacked by an enemy pawn. Naturally, an outpost gains in value if it is central, and even more so if it is situated inside the enemy camp. The importance of the outpost increases if the opponent does not have a bishop moving on squares of the same color. In most cases it is beneficial to be able to control the outpost with one of our pawns.

Another factor adding value to the outpost is its location on an open file. In that case we are able to double our rooks behind the piece occupying the outpost, and then open the file at the right moment. The piece we usually aim to place on an outpost is the knight, followed by the bishop, the rook and – in rare cases – the queen.

It follows from the above that a square representing an outpost for us is also a weakness for the opponent and may have seriously negative consequences for him.

In practice we encounter two different situations revolving around the outpost:

(1) The outpost has already been created. In this case our task is simple: control it and exploit it.

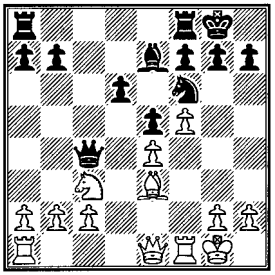
(2) The outpost has not yet been created. This case is clearly more demanding, as we first have to identify which square can serve as an outpost and then try to wrest control of it from the opponent. Methods often used in this case are the strengthening of our control of the outpost by pawns and the exchange of the opponent's pieces which can control it.

Naturally, the possession of one or more outposts does not guarantee victory. The piece that will occupy the outpost will have to cooperate harmoniously with the rest of the army from its powerful position in order to further our aims.

We can conclude that knights love outposts – they just sit there and don't bother moving at all, as they are able to control a fair amount of squares from behind and from a distance! The most usual case is the weak d5-square; we can see its exploitation in the next four examples:

(9) Smyslov – Rudakovsky
Moscow 1945
Sicilian Defense [B83]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♗e2 ♗e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♗e3 ♘c6 9.f4 ♕c7 10.♕e1 ♘×d4 11.♗×d4 e5 12.♗e3 ♗e6 13.f5 ♗c4 14.♗×c4 ♕×c4 (D)



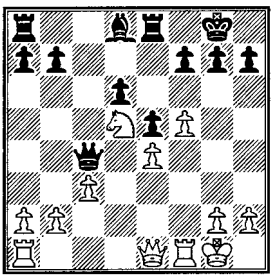
15.♗g5!

White prepares an ideal position for his knight. After the exchange on f6, it will be placed on the excellent d5-square, from where it will guide White's forces to action all over the board. This is a typical method of creating a good knight vs. bad bishop theme.

15...♖fe8 16.♗×f6 ♗×f6 17.♘d5 ♗d8

Black could think of giving up the exchange with 17...♕×c2 18.♖f2 ♕c5 (18...♕c6 19.♖c1 ♕a4 20.b3 ±) 19.♖c1 ♕d4 20.♘c7 ±. Although material is lost, I do not see what else he can do...

18.c3 (D)



White's knight is ideally placed on the strong d5-outpost and dominates the whole board. If we add to this White's superior pawn structure (the d6-pawn is backward and weak), we can easily understand that he should be holding a large plus. Black has no compensation for the strategic defects.

18...b5 19.b3 ♕c5+ 20.♔h1 ♖c8 21.♖f3

Preparing a kingside assault.

21...♔h8?!

Good or bad, Black had to play 21...f6. After 22.a4 (yes, White can play on both sides!) 22...a6 23.a×b5 a×b5 24.♖h3 White's position is superior but Black is not losing yet.

22.f6!

Now White will quickly achieve victory by attacking the black monarch.

22...g×f6

22...g6 23.♕d2 ♖g8 24.♕h6 g5 25.♖h3 +− or 22...♖g8 23.♕h4 +−.

23.♕h4 ♖g8 24.♘×f6 ♖g7

24...♗×f6 25.♕×f6+ ♖g7 26.♖g3 is only a transposition.

25.♖g3! ♗×f6

Or 25...♗e7 26.♖×g7 ♔×g7 27.♕×h7+ ♔×f6 28.♕h6#.

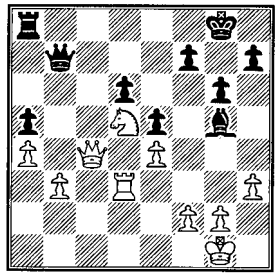
26.♕×f6 ♖cg8 27.♖d1!

And Black has no defense to White's idea: ♖×d6, ♖×g7 and ♖d8+.

27...d5 28.♖×g7 1-0

(10) Anand – Kamsky
Sanghi Nagar 1994
Ruy Lopez [C92]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♗b7 10.d4 ♖e8 11.♘bd2 ♗f8 12.♗c2 g6 13.d5 ♘b8 14.b3 c6 15.c4 a5 16.d×c6 ♗×c6 17.c×b5 ♗×b5 18.♘c4 ♘a6 19.♗g5 ♘b4 20.♘e3 ♗e7 21.♗×f6 ♗×f6 22.a3 ♘×c2 23.♕×c2 ♗g7 24.♖ad1 ♕b8 25.a4 ♖c8 26.♕b1 ♗a6 27.♘d2 ♖c3 28.♘d5 ♗d3 29.♕a1 ♖c2 30.♖e3 ♗a6 31.♖c3 ♖×c3 32.♕×c3 ♗h6 33.♘c4 ♗×c4 34.♕×c4 ♗g5 35.♖d3 ♕b7 (D)



White enjoys the advantage of the better minor piece (knight vs. bishop) and the better pawn structure, as Black's d6-pawn cannot be considered ideally placed. As for a plan, White can consider combining his excellently placed knight with the creation of a passed pawn on the queenside, and generally play on both sides of the board. Black has no active counterplay and is doomed to passivity.

36.♖c3 ♖b8 37.♕d3 ♔g7

White also stands better after 37...♗d8 38.♖c4 ♖c8 (38...♔g7 39.b4 a×b4 40.♖×b4 ♕a7 41.♖×b8 ♕×b8±) 39.b4.

38.g3?!

Following the principle of "not hurrying," White gradually "improves" his position. But 38.b4! a×b4 39.♖c7 ♕a8 was critical, as then White would have the pleasant choice between two good moves:

(a) 40.♕b3 (40.♕f3 ♖f8∞) 40...♕a5! 41.g3! (41.♘b6 ♖f8 42.♖c6 h5∞ 43.♘c4? ♕a8 44.♖×d6 ♕×e4 45.♖d1 ♖d8∓) 41...♖f8 (41...♗d2? 42.♕f3 ♖f8 43.♕f6+ ♔h6 44.♘e7! or 41...♗d8 42.♖d7 are excellent for White, but perhaps Black's best practical chance was 41...♖a8!? 42.h4 ♗d8 43.♖d7 ♕×a4 44.♕×a4 ♖×a4 45.♖×d8 b3 46.♖b8 ♖×e4 47.♖×b3±) 42.♖b7 ♗d2 43.♕f3 ♗g5 (43...♕d8 44.a5!) 44.h4 ♗d8 45.♕b3±, but still this position looks quite unpleasant for him.

(b) 40.♕c4!? and now:

(b1) 40...♕×a4? 41.♖×f7+! ♔h6 (41...♔×f7 42.♘b6+) 42.♖×h7+! ♔×h7 43.♕c7+ ♔h6 44.♕×b8±.

(b2) 40...♗d8 41.♖d7 b3 (41...♕×a4 42.♖×f7+! ♔h8 43.♖f8+ ♔g7 44.♖g8+ ♔h6 45.♘e3!+−) 42.♘b4 ♔h6 43.♕×f7 ♕×e4 44.♕×h7+ ♔g5 45.♖×d6+−.

(b3) 40...♕a5 41.♘f4 d5 42.♘×d5 b3 43.♘c3 ♖f8 44.♖b7±.

(b4) 40...b3 41.♘b6 d5! 42.♖×f7+! ♔×f7 43.♕c7+ ♗e7 44.♘×a8 ♖b4! 45.♘b6! b2 46.♘c8 b1♕+ 47.♔h2 ♖b7! 48.♘d6+ ♔f6 49.♕×b7 ♕c1 50.♕c7!! ♕×c7 51.♘e8+ ♔f7 52.♘×c7 d×e4 53.a5 ♗c5 54.♘b5 ♗×f2 55.g3!+−.

38...♗d8!

Of course Black covers the c7-square!

39.♕f3 ♕d7

Also possible is 39...♖c8 40.♔g2 ♖×c3 41.♕×c3 f5 42.f3.

40.♔g2

40.♕g4? is out of the question: 40...♕×g4 (40...♕e6!?) 41.h×g4 ♗b6! 42.♖d3 ♗c5=. White not only lost the "Capablanca Theorem" option (♕+♘ vs. ♕+♗) but also the chance for a passed queenside pawn.

40...h5

Taking away the g4-square is useful and also, under some circumstances, the pawn might advance to h4.

41.♖c4 ♕b7 42.♖c3

It is too early for 42.b4 a×b4 43.♖×b4 as Black can sacrifice his queen with 43...♕×b4! (43...♕a8 44.♖b5!±) 44.♘×b4 ♖×b4, retaining decent chances to survive: 45.♕d1 ♖d4 46.♕c2 h4. But the other option with 42.h4! ♖c8 (42...♕×b3 43.♕×b3 ♖×b3 44.♖c8 ♗f6 45.♖a8 g5 46.h×g5 ♗×g5

47.♖×a5 ♖a3 48.♖a6 ♗d2 49.♖×d6 ♖×a4 50.♘f6± is also good enough) 43.♕c3 ♖×c4 44.♕×c4 ♕a7 45.b4±.

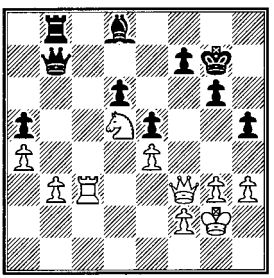
42...♕d7 43.♕e2 ♗b6 44.♕d2!

Not of course 44.♘×b6? ♖×b6=.

44...♗d8!

44...♗c5? looks attractive, but fails tactically to 45.♖f3 (45.♕g5 ♕d8 46.♘e7!±) 45...♕d8 46.♘f6 ♖b7 47.♕g5 as the c5-bishop is far away from the defense. Black's fate is also similar after 44...f5? 45.e×f5 ♕×f5 46.♘×b6 ♖×b6 47.♖c7+ ♔f6 48.♕d5 ♕e6 49.♕f3+ ♕f5 50.♕a8+−.

45.♕c2 ♕b7 46.♕d3 ♗b6 47.♕f3 ♗d8 (D)



48.g4?!

I do not like the text, as it weakens the dark squares on the kingside without offering anything positive. 48.h4 is natural, preserving White's advantage: 48...♖c8 (48...f5 49.e×f5 g×f5 50.♖c4! ♕×b3 51.♘e3±) 49.♖×c8 (49.♕d3 ♖×c3 50.♕×c3 f5 51.f3 [51.♔f3 ♗b6!] 51...f×e4 52.f×e4 ♕a6 53.♕c2 ♗b6∞) 49...♕×c8 50.♕d3.

48...h×g4 49.h×g4

It would be preferable to recapture with the queen (intending h4-h5) but here 49.♕×g4 fails to 49...f5! with an unclear game.

49...♖c8!

Now that as White has weakened his kingside, Black willingly trades off the rooks to invade and harass the white monarch. Also possible was 49...♕d7 50.♕g3 (50.♖c1 ♕b7 51.b4 a×b4 52.♕h3 ♗g5!) 50...♗g5 51.♖c7 ♕e6∞.

50.♕e3 ♖×c3 51.♕×c3 ♕a6 52.♕c2

After 52.b4 a×b4 53.♕×b4 ♕e2 54.♔g3 ♗h4+! 55.♔×h4 ♕×f2+ 56.♔h3 ♕f3+ Black is able to draw (remember 48.g4?!).

52...♕a7

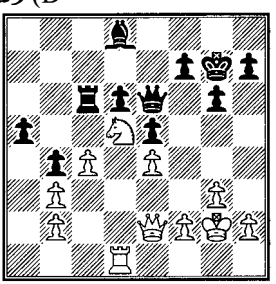
And now Black's queen threatens to infiltrate via d4.

53.♕d2 ♕b7 54.♕d3 ½-½

White still stands slightly better and he should have continued the fight with 54.b4 a×b4 55.♕×b4±.

(11) J.Polgar – Anand
Wijk aan Zee 1998
Sicilian Defense [B90]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 e5 7.♘f3 ♗e7 8.♗c4 0-0 9.0-0 ♗e6 10.♕e2 b5 11.♗b3 ♗×b3 12.a×b3 ♘bd7 13.♖fd1 ♕c7 14.♗g5 ♖fc8 15.♘e1 ♕b7 16.♗×f6 ♘×f6 17.♘d5 ♘×d5 18.♖×d5 ♖c5 19.♖ad1 ♖×d5 20.♖×d5 ♖c8 21.c3 b4 22.c4 g6 23.g3 ♖c5 24.♖d1 a5 25.♘c2 ♔g7 26.♕d3 ♖c6 27.♘e3 ♕c8 28.♔g2 ♕e6 29.♕e2 ♗d8 30.♘d5 (D



With precise play, White has achieved her strategic goal – the "eternal" knight on d5 vs. Black's rather poor

bishop. As the knight should not just sit on d5 and watch, White needs to organize an attack in which it can take part.

30...♖c5 31.♕e3 ♗e7 32.♖d3 ♗d8 33.♕d2 ♖c6 34.♕d1 ♔g8 35.h4!

White understands that she will not win by working only on the central file. So, she opens a "second front" on the kingside – in complete accordance with the well-known method of realizing one's advantage, the "two weaknesses principle."

35...♔g7?!

This "sit-and-wait" policy is faulty, as White will always find ways to get through. Black should have stopped the further advance of White's h-pawn by playing 35...h5. Then White can try to penetrate through to the queenside: 36.♕a1 ♕g4 37.f3 ♕c8 38.♕a4 ♕b7 39.♘e3±.

36.h5

Now there is tension on the kingside.

36...♗g5 37.♕f3 ♖c8 38.♖d1

White prepares to transfer her major pieces to the h-file, creating threats against the enemy king.

38...♖c6 39.♕e2 ♖c8 40.♖h1 ♔g8 41.f3!

White vacates the f2-square, from where her queen will threaten both flanks (♕f2-a7 and ♕f2-g1-h2). Keep in mind that, in order to make the opponent's defense as difficult as possible, it is necessary to create problems for him over the entire board.

41...♖b8 42.♕f2 ♖b7

Black has defended against the white queen's invasion on the diagonal, but White now has the additional possibility of c4-c5!.

43.h×g6!

A good move, as the alternative 43.c5?! d×c5 44.♕×c5 ♖b8! (44...♕a6? 45.♘f6+!! ♔g7 [45...♗×f6 46.♕c8+ ♔g7 47.h6# or 45...♕×f6 46.♕c8+ ♕d8 47.♕×b7 ♕d2+ 48.♔h3+–] 46.♘e8+ ♔g8 47.♕×e5±) 45.♕×a5 ♖c8 would give Black too much counterplay.

43...fxg6

Alas, recapturing with 43...h×g6 is prohibited, as after 44.♕g1 f5 (or 44...♗f6 45.♕h2 ♗g7 46.♕h4) 45.♕h2 ♗f6 46.♕h3! (46.♕h6 ♗g7 47.♕g5 [47.♕h7+ ♔f7 48.♖a1 ♖a7] 47...♖f7! is not so clear: 48.♕d8+ ♗f8 49.♕×a5? f×e4 50.f×e4? ♕g4!–+) 46...♖f7 47.g4 f×e4 48.f×e4 White wins: 48...♖b7 49.♔g3 ♖f7 50.♕h6 ♗g7 51.♕h7+ ♔f8 52.g5! ♖a7 53.♘f6 ♕f7 54.♖f1 ♗×f6 55.♕h6+ ♕g7 56.♖×f6+ ♖f7 57.♖×g6+–.

44.c5!

Once the position of the black king has been weakened, White does not mind opening the c-file.

44...d×c5 45.♕×c5 ♗d8 46.♖c1!

The rook no longer has any business on the h-file, so White transfers it to the opened c-file.

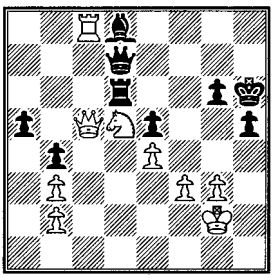
46...♔f7?!

A loss of time. 46...♔g7 was more accurate.

47.♕e3 ♔g7 48.♖c4 ♖d7 49.♕c1

This regrouping (rook in front – queen behind) is a typical method of open file domination.

49...h5 50.♖c6 ♖d6 51.♖c8 ♕d7 52.♕c5 ♔h6 (D)



53.♖b8

White had no reason to avoid the immediate 53.♖a8 (threatening ♖a7) 53...♗b6 54.♕c1+ ♔g7 55.♕g5.

53...♗f6

53...g5 only weakens the f5-square: 54.♖a8! ♕e6 (54...g4 55.f×g4 h×g4 56.♕f2! ♔g6 57.♕f8) 55.♘e3 ♖d2+ 56.♔f1 +– (56.♔g1? ♗b6), but Black might had tried 53...♔g7 54.♖b7 (54.♖a8!? ♗b6 55.♕c1 ♗d8 56.♕e3 ♗b6 57.♕g5 ±) 54...♕×b7 55.♕×d6 ±.

54.♕e3+ ♗g5?!

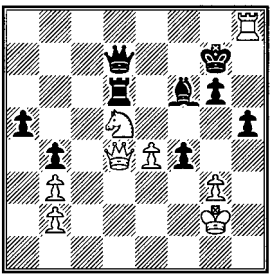
Also bad is 54...♔h7?! 55.♖a8+– but Black had to play 54...♔g7 55.♖a8 ♕b5 56.♖a7+! (56.♘c7 ♖d3 57.♕e2 ±) 56...♖d7 (56...♔g8 57.♘×f6+ ♖×f6 58.♕h6 ♕e2+ 59.♔h3 ♕f1+ 60.♔h4 +–) 57.♖×d7+ ♕×d7 58.♕b6 ♗d8 (58...♕d8 59.♕e6) 59.♕b8 ±. White's position is obviously much better, thanks to the strong d5-knight and the weak black king, so it's not so strange that a winning combination exists!

55.f4! e×f4

Black had to try 55...♗×f4, although his survival chances after 56.g×f4 ♕g4+ 57.♕g3 ♕e2+ 58.♔h3 ♕f1+ 59.♕g2 ♕×g2+ 60.♔×g2 e×f4 61.♖h8+ ♔g7 62.♖a8 would be slim.

56.♖h8+! 1-0

And Black resigned, as he "felt" the coming combination after the forced 56...♔g7 57.♕d4+ ♗f6 (D)

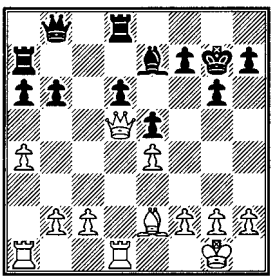


58.♕×f6+ ♖×f6 59.♖h7+ ♔×h7 60.♘×f6+, forking the queen and winning easily.

A very recent example played (unfortunately) by one of my students, will conclude this chapter.

(12) Adams – Esen
Konya 2010
Sicilian Defense [B90]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.a4 e5 7.♘f3 ♕c7 8.♗e3 ♗e7 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0 b6 11.♕d3 ♗b7 12.♘h4 g6 13.♗h6 ♖d8 14.♘f5 ♗f8 15.♗g5 ♘bd7 16.♘e3 ♗e7 17.♕c4 ♕b8 18.♗×f6 ♘×f6 19.♘ed5 ♗×d5 20.♘×d5 ♖a7 21.♖fd1 ♘×d5 22.♕×d5 ♔g7 (D)



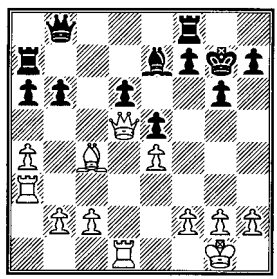
White holds a pleasant and nearly permanent advantage. His bishop is certainly a much better piece than its counterpart, as there are many more targets at its disposal. Also, the backward black d-pawn is not a great fact for Black either; it will not fall easily and it bolsters the defense. And what are White's plans? Well, he should combine offensive activity in various parts of the

board (♖a3-f3, g3, ♔g2, h4-h5, etc) but the most important is that he should not change any of the remaining pieces. With every exchange Black can more easily organize his defense, as his spatial disadvantage is difficult to handle.

23.♗c4

The white bishop takes its position; its first and permanent target is the f7-square (and not "by force" the f7-pawn) and generally the a2-g8 diagonal. Black has no counterpart to offset...

23...♖f8 24.♖a3 (D)



24...♖c7?!

Black's policy (a passive one) cannot be recommended. He should try to become active and exchange some pieces and therefore should try 24...f5. After 25.e×f5 ♖×f5 (25...g×f5 26.♖g3+ ♔h8 27.♕d2!±) 26.♖f3± and White stands clearly better but far from winning.

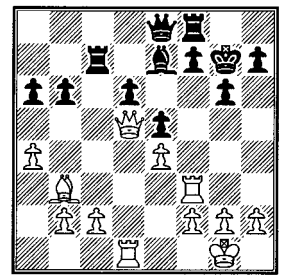
25.♖f3 ♕e8

Now 25...f5?! fails to 26.e×f5 g×f5 (26...♖×f5 27.♖×f5 g×f5 28.♕f7+ ♔h8 29.♗×a6+– ; 26...♕a8 27.♕×a8 ♖×a8 28.♗d5 ♖f8 29.c4 g×f5 30.♖b3 ♖b8 31.a5 b5 32.c×b5 a×b5 33.a6±) 27.♕e6 ♔h8 28.♗×a6+– .

26.♗b3 (D)

26...f6

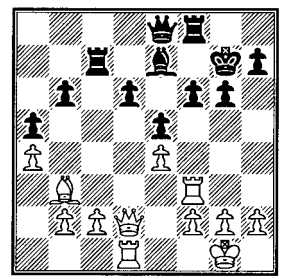
Black weakens the a2-g8 diagonal but somehow he had to liberate his queen. Note that 26...f5?! wasn't good here either: 27.e×f5 ♖×f5 28.♖×f5 g×f5 29.♕e6+– .



27.♕d2

Now the bishop will be placed in the "royal" d5-square, while the h6-square might come under a combined attack.

27...a5 (D)



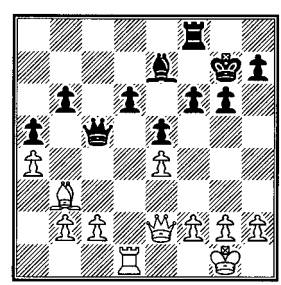
28.♖c3?

A mysterious move. White exchanges an active piece, losing his combined attack on h6. More logical was 28.♖h3 h5 29.♕e2± .

28...♖×c3 29.♕×c3 ♕c8

White advantage was certainly reduced; he is now obliged to keep the queens on board, otherwise he would lose the opportunity to attack various points in Black's camp.

30.♕e3 ♕c5 31.♕e2 (D)



31...f5!

Correct – Black has to be active.

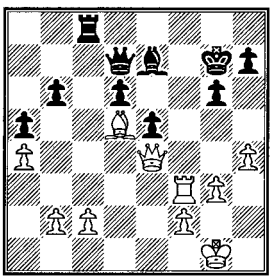
32.e×f5 ♖×f5

Safe and correct. After 32...g×f5?! 33.♖d3! White's attack should not be underestimated.

33.♖d5 ♕c7 34.g3 ♖f8 35.h4

This is the plan that was discussed above. White tries to weaken Black's kingside defense by organizing an attack on g6-pawn.

35...♕c8 36.♖d3 ♕f5 37.♗d5 ♕d7 38.♕e4 ♖c8 39.♖f3 (D)



39...♗f6?!

Exchanges nearly always favor the defender! For this reason Black had to opt for 39...♖f8.

40.♔g2 ♖c5 41.b3 ♖c8 42.h5 ♕e7

Now after 42...♖f8 comes 43.h×g6 h×g6 44.♗c4 ♗e7 45.♖×f8 ♗×f8 46.♗d3 ♕f7 47.c4 and White will win a pawn with 48.♕c6.

43.♕g4 ♖c5

43...♖×c2 44.h×g6 h×g6 45.♗e4+–

44.c4

Now it's all over; Black has no real defense against White's kingside threats.

44...♖c7 45.♕h3 ♕d8

Or 45...g×h5 46.♕×h5 h6 47.♕g4+ ♗g5 48.♖f5+–.

46.♕e6

Also good is 46.h6+ ♔h8 47.♕g4 and Black is in *zugzwang*!

46...♗g5 47.h×g6 h×g6 48.♗e4 ♗f6 49.♖d3!

As previously noted, combined attacks are White's "secret" weapons!

49...♖d7 50.♕g4 ♗g5

50...g5 51.♕h5 ♖f7 52.♗g6+–

51.f4

White wins as the black king will not find any shelter.

51...e×f4 52.g×f4 ♗f6 53.♕×g6+ ♔f8 54.♖g3 d5 55.♗×d5 1-0

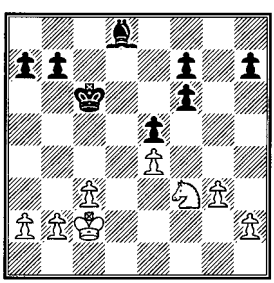
The Important f5-square

Concept

The important element of the outpost was detailed described in the first volume of the *Training with the Experts* series. Here we will look at an important outpost, the f5-square, which is often accompanied by doubled f-pawns and as it is located near the black king's castled position, could turn out to be decisive. In general, weak squares are undesirable and we should be very careful when creating them... We will start with a simple ending:

(13) Salov – Ljubojevic
Buenos Aires 1994
Sicilian Defense [B55]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.f3 e5 6.♗b5+ ♗d7 7.♗×d7+ ♕×d7 8.♘f5 d5 9.♗g5 d×e4 10.♗×f6 ♕×d1+ 11.♔×d1 g×f6 12.f×e4 ♘c6 13.c3 ♖g8 14.g3 ♖d8+ 15.♘d2 ♘e7 16.♔c2 ♔d7 17.♖ad1 ♔c6 18.♘f3 ♖×d1 19.♘×e7+ ♗×e7 20.♖×d1 ♖d8 21.♖×d8 ♗×d8 (D)



This is a classic example in which the superiority of the knight vs. the bishop is evident. This superiority is based on:

1. Better pawn-structure (doubled and isolated black pawns on the kingside).

2. Strong outposts on the d5- and f5-squares.

3. Potential passed pawn on the queenside, where White's majority is active.

22.♘h4

The knight is heading for the important outpost.

22...♗e7 23.♘f5 ♗f8 24.b4!

Now the procedure for the creation of a passed pawn begins.

24...♔d7

24...b5 can only help White: 25.♔b3 a6 26.c4 ♔d7 27.a4.

25.♔b3 ♔c6 26.♔c4 a6 27.a4 b6

27...b5+ 28.a×b5+ a×b5+ 29.♔b3 ♔b6 30.c4 b×c4+ 31.♔×c4 +− .

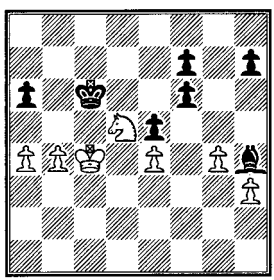
28.g4 b5+ 29.♔b3 ♔d7 30.♘e3

30.a×b5 a×b5 31.c4+− is equally fine.

30...♗h6 31.♘d5 ♗g5 32.c4 ♔c6 33.♘c3

Forcing Black's hand.

33...b×c4+ 34.♔×c4 ♗h4 35.♘d5 ♗g5 36.h3 ♗h4 (D)



Black is deprived of any counterplay, passively waiting for the end. Such a situation must clearly be avoided when at all possible.

37.♘e7+ ♔d7 38.♘f5 ♗e1 39.b5 a×b5+ 40.♔×b5!

In general, a passed pawn should be created as distantly as possible.

40...♗d2 41.♔b6 ♗e1 42.a5 ♗f2+ 43.♔b7 ♔e6 44.♔c6 1-0

Black resigned because of 44...♗g1 45.a6 ♗f2 46.♘d6 ♗g1 47.♘c8 ♗f2 48.♘b6. A clear-cut technical win.

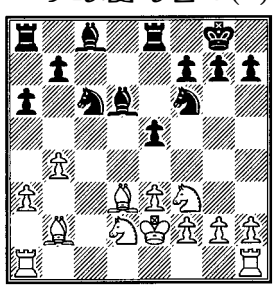
The late middlegame positions with a weak f5-square are also difficult to defend. One must be extremely careful when giving to the opponent chances to create this weak square; one should at least have clear compensation for the deficit, something that one would be happy about...

(14) Ivkov – Galliamova

Aruba 1992

Queen's Gambit Accepted [D26]

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.e3 d×c4 4.♗×c4 ♘f6 5.d4 c5 6.d×c5 ♕×d1+ 7.♔×d1 ♗×c5 8.♔e2 a6 9.♘bd2 ♘c6 10.a3 0-0 11.b4 ♗d6 12.♗b2 e5 13.♗d3 ♖e8 (D)



It seems that Black is not doing badly and she is about to fully equalize as the balanced pawn structure helps her.

14.♘e4!

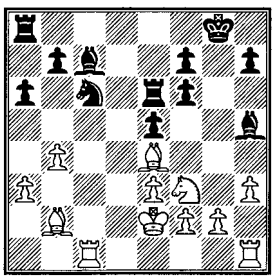
But White on the move creates un-

pleasant threats by well-thought exchanges.

14...♗c7?!

Not the best. 14...♘d4+?! wasn't good either because of 15.♘×d4 (15.e×d4 e×d4 16.♘fd2 ♘×e4 17.♘×e4 f5 18.♗c4+ ♔h8 19.♗d5 f×e4 20.♗×d4±) 15...♘×e4 16.♘b5 ♗d7 (16...a×b5?! 17.♗×e4±) 17.♗×e4 ♗×b5+ 18.♔f3± but Black should have gone in for 14...♘×e4 15.♗×e4 f5! 16.♗×c6 (16.♗d5+ ♗e6 17.♖hd1 ♖ad8=) 16...b×c6 17.♖hd1 ♗b8 18.♖ac1 a5 19.♖×c6 a×b4 20.a×b4 e4∞/=.

15.♖ac1 ♗g4 16.h3 ♗h5 17.♘×f6+ g×f6 18.♗e4 ♖e6 (D)



After a forced series of moves, White has achieved a clear advantage. Black's weak f5-square, her doubled f-pawns and her uncoordinated pieces justifies this evaluation.

19.g4!

Fixing the f5-square once and for all.

19...♗g6 20.♘d2 ♖d8 21.♗f5! ♖e7

Black cannot liquidate her weak f5-square: 21...♗×f5 22.g×f5 ♖ed6 23.♘e4 ♖d3 24.♖hg1+ ♔f8 25.♗c3 and material will be lost.

22.♘e4 ♔g7 23.♖hg1!

A clear prophylaxis against ...♗×f5. White could win material with 23.♘c5 ♗b8 24.♘×b7 ♖×b7 25.♖×c6 a5 26.♗c3 a×b4 27.a×b4±, but there was no need to hurry. Black's position sooner or later will fall apart.

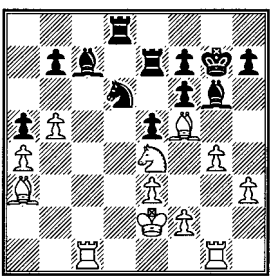
23...a5?!

Trying for some "counterplay." 23...♗b6 was more tenacious, although after 24.h4 Black's position is a mess.

24.b5 ♘a7 25.a4?!

Here White missed a nice tactical shot: 25.g5! f×g5 26.♖×c7 ♗×f5 27.♖×e7 ♗×e4 28.♗×e5++−.

25...♘c8 26.♗a3 ♘d6 (D)



Now White wins material. His great positional advantage allows small winning tactics. This is not something magical as it happens very often after a chessplayer has outplayed his opponent positionally...

27.♖×c7! ♖×c7 28.♗×d6 ♖c4 29.♗e7! ♖a8 30.♔f3 ♖×a4 31.h4

31.♗×f6+ ♔f8 32.♗×e5 wins as well.

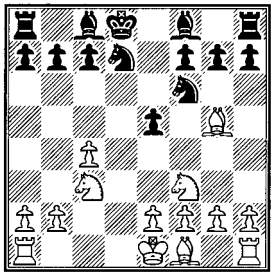
31...h6 32.h5 ♗×f5 33.g×f5+ ♔h7

33...♔h8 34.♗×f6+ ♔h7 35.♖g7+ and mate in 12!

34.♘×f6+ ♔h8 35.♗d6 e4+ 36.♔f4 1-0

(15) Farago – Ljubojevic
Wijk aan Zee 1988
Old Indian Defense [A53]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♘c3 e5 4.d×e5 d×e5 5.♕×d8+ ♔×d8 6.♘f3 ♘bd7 7.♗g5 (D)



7...h6?!

Too optimistic. Black should chosen the modest but fully acceptable 7...♗e7 8.0-0-0 +=.

8.♗×f6+ g×f6

Now Black has a weak f5-square and a ripped kingside pawn structure.

9.g3?!

White wants to take full control of the f5-square and halve Black's bishop pair (by exchanging a pair of bishops), but more accurate was 9.0-0-0 c6 10.g3.

9...c6?!

9...♗b4! was best, as then Black would have enough compensation for his "problematic" kingside.

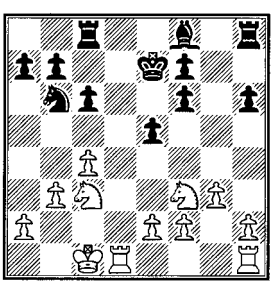
10.♗h3 ♘b6

10...♗b4!? 11.♖c1± wasn't so bad.

11.0-0-0+ ♔e7

The alternative was 11...♔c7 after which 12.♗×c8 ♖×c8 13.b3 ♗a3+ 14.♔c2 and ♘h4 gives White a very pleasant advantage.

12.♗×c8 ♖×c8 13.b3 (D)



White has obtained a very pleasant advantage, as his superior light piece (knight vs. bishop) will help him to take full control over the f5-square. A white knight solidly posted on f5 will be a very helpful force, assisting the rest of its army to create nasty threats.

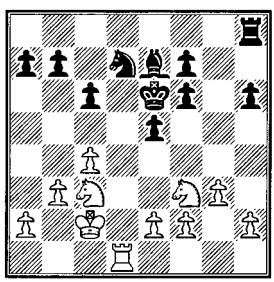
13...♔e6 14.♖d3 ♖c7

Passive. Black should have thought of trying to control the f5-square again by 14...f5 15.♖hd1±. His kingside pawns would remain weak, but at least there would be not so many threats against them.

15.♖hd1 ♖d7 16.♔c2 ♗e7?!

But this is really the bad move. Here Black was obliged to try 16...♖×d3 when after 17.e×d3! f5 18.♖e1 ♗g7 19.♘×e5 ♗×e5 20.d4 f6 21.f4 ♘d7 22.d×e5 f×e5 23.f×e5 ♘×e5 24.♘e2± White would be happy but Black is still fighting.

17.♖×d7 ♘×d7 (D)



18.♘h4!

Now White will completely control the f5-square.

18...♖c8

18...f5? 19.♘×f5! +–

19.♘f5! ♗f8

19...♔×f5 20.♖×d7 loses material.

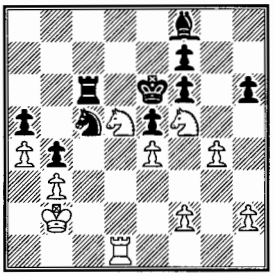
20.g4 b5?!

Trying to find some counterplay but giving White another important square, d5. Perhaps Black should have considered 20...a5 and ...♘c5, although White's advantage would be great in any event.

21.c×b5 c×b5 22.♔b2 a6 23.♘d5! ♖c6 24.e4

Full domination over the white knights' strong outposts on d5 and f5.

24...a5 25.a3 b4 26.a4 ♘c5 (D)

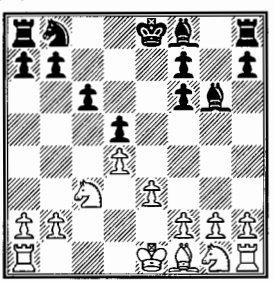


Great positional domination creates the preconditions for successful tactics. Here comes one...

27.♘de7! 1-0 And Black resigned in view of 27...♖b6 (27...♗×e7 28.♘g7+; 27...♖a6 28.♖d8+-) 28.♖d8! ♘d7 (28...♗g7 29.♘d5!) 29.♘d5 ♖c6 30.♖e8+ ♗e7 31.♖×e7+.

(16) Van Wely – Short
Wijk aan Zee 2005
Queen's Gambit Declined [D35]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.c×d5 e×d5 5.♗g5 c6 6.e3 ♗f5 7.♕f3 ♗g6 8.♗×f6 ♕×f6 9.♕×f6 g×f6 (D)



This is a very well-known position, one in which both players seem to be happy: White has the weak f5-square to draw his plans around, while Black is compensated for his flawed pawn structure by the bishop pair and easy play. To choose a side it is a matter of preference...

10.♘f3

White's plan is simple: he will post his knight on h4 and then try something like ♗d3, ♘g2-f4 and h4-h5 to force Black to exchange the light-square bishops. If he succeeds, then his advantage will be huge.

10...♘d7 11.♘h4 ♗e7 12.g3 ♘b6

Lately Black has tried 12...f5!? 13.♘g2 ♘f6 14.f3 ♗d6 as in Hillarp Persson-Vas, Lund 2010.

13.f3 a5 14.♔f2 a4 15.♖c1

Or 15.♗e2 ♘c8 16.e4 a3 17.b3 d×e4 18.f×e4 0-0 19.♖ac1 ♗b4 20.♗d3 ♖d8∞ Gustafsson-Sokolov Amsterdam 2001.

15...♘c8!

A well-known maneuver, aiming to relocate the knight to d6, from where it would control the important f5-square.

16.♗e2 ♘d6 17.♖hd1 0-0 18.♗d3!

White proceeds according to the previously described plan.

18...♖fe8?!

18...♗×d3 19.♖×d3 f5 20.♘g2∞ was a must.

19.g4!

A pawn is needed for better control!

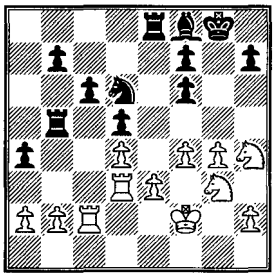
19...♗f8 20.♘e2!

Relocating, focusing on the f5-square.

20...♗h6 21.f4 ♗×d3 22.♖×d3 ♗f8 23.♘g3 ♖a5?!

Black's plan is wrong, as it will in fact be White who is able to take advantage of the open file. Modest but playable was 23...♖e6 24.♘hf5 +=.

24.♖c2 ♖b5 (D)



25.♘hf5!

White dreams of a ♘ vs. ♗ endgame, in which his superior light piece and pawn structure will tell. So, exchanges are of an ultimate importance.

25...♘c4

Black has to fight for counterplay. 25...♘×f5 26.♘×f5± would only have helped White.

26.b3 a×b3 27.♖×b3!

White correctly exchanges Black's active pieces.

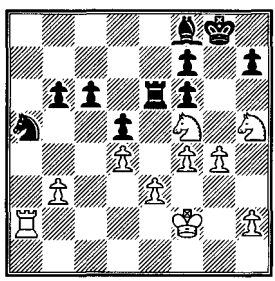
27...♖×b3

If 27...♗b4, then 28.♘h5 ♖e6 29.e4!±.

28.a×b3 ♘a5?!

Good or bad Black had to accept a worse position with 28...♘d6 29.♖a2 ♘×f5 30.♘×f5±.

29.♘h5 ♖e6 30.♖a2! b6 (D)



31.♖a4! 1-0 And Black resigned as White's rook penetrates: 31...h6 32.b4 ♘c4 33.♖a8+-, winning material. The knight on f5 looks like a dragon!

Conclusion

I would give the matter considerable thought before I surrendered the f5-square outpost (and not only this outpost) to my opponent. The compensation must be concrete and the dynamic balance should be kept. Otherwise, an easy game and better chances are awaiting the side that can benefit from the weak f5-square. Maybe I am too concerned about pawn weaknesses, but my experience has taught me that it is better to limit their existence – or avoid them completely!

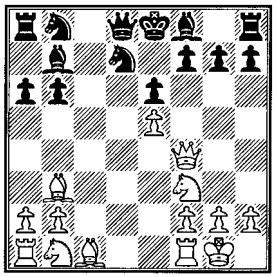
Rook on the Run

Concept

In his book *My System*, in the chapter "On Open Files," Aron Nimzowitsch formulated the following idea: to advance in one file with the idea of giving up that file for another one, using that file as a jumping-off place. Unfortunately, he hardly developed this idea any further but here we can somewhat fill in the blanks with a small selection of examples. The main idea consists of transferring a rook via a semi-open file to another flank, in order to include it in the attack or generally to take over the initiative in the center. We will start with a classic game:

(17) Shipov – Miles
Hastings 1998
Queen's Gambit Accepted [D27]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 d×c4 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 e6 5.♗×c4 c5 6.0-0 a6 7.♗b3 b6 8.e4 c×d4 9.e5 ♘fd7 10.♕×d4 ♗b7 11.♕f4 (D)



11...♘c5?

Black's concept is wrong, as he loses precious time and also opens the a-file for White. Better was 11...♘c6 12.♘c3 (12.♕g3!? ♕c7 13.♗f4 +=) 12...♕c7 13.♖e1 ♘c5 14.♗c2 ♖d8 (14...♗e7? 15.♕g3; 14...0-0-0!? 15.♗e3±) 15.♘e4 ♘×e4 16.♗×e4 ♘b4± or 11...♕c7 12.♘c3 (12.♘bd2 ♘c5) 12...♗×f3 13.♕×f3 ♘c6 (13...♖a7 14.♕g3±) 14.♗f4 ♖d8 15.♕g3±.

12.♘c3!

White continues his development, although 12.♗c2!? was not bad either: 12...♘d3 13.♕g3 ♘×c1 14.♖×c1 ♘d7 15.♘bd2 g6 16.♗e4 ♗×e4 17.♘×e4 ♗e7 18.♖c6±.

12...♘×b3 13.a×b3 ♗e7

What else? If 13...♘d7, then 14.♘g5! ♕e7 15.♘ce4 ♗×e4 16.♕×e4 (16.♘×e4 ♕b4 17.♖a4 ♕×b3 18.♘g5 ♘×e5 19.♖e4 ♗d6 20.♖×e5 0-0 21.♕e4 g6 22.♖×e6 f×e6 23.♕b7+−) 16...♖a7 17.♗e3± and if 13...♘c6, then 14.♖d1 ♕c7 15.♘e4 ♖d8 16.♗e3±.

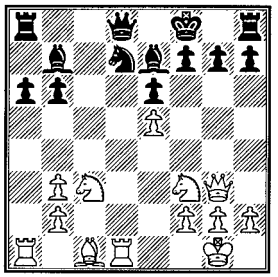
14.♕g3! ♔f8

Black is more or less forced to give-up his castling rights. On either 14...0-0? 15.♗h6± or 14...g6 15.♗h6± White should be more than happy.

15.♖d1 ♘d7 (D)

The alternative 15...♕c7 is of no help, especially after 16.♖a4!±.

16.♖a4!



Here it comes! White has clear pressure on the kingside and the last of his forces joins the attack. The rook will be transferred to g4 from where it will participate in the attack.

16...♕e8

In general I would prefer 16...♖c8 17.♖ad4 (another point) 17...♗c6 18.♗g5 ♖c7 19.♗×e7+ ♕×e7 20.♖d6±.

17.♖g4 g6

What else? If 17...♗×f3 then 18.♖×g7! ♗h4 (18...♗×d1? 19.♖g8+! ♖×g8 20.♗h6+ ♖g7 21.♕×g7#) 19.♕×h4 h5 (19...♗×d1 20.♗h6+−) 20.♖×d7! ♕×d7 21.♖g3! ♗c6 22.♕f6 ♖h7 23.♕g5+− and if 17...♖g8, then simply again 18.♖×g7 ♖×g7 19.♗h6+−.

18.♗h6+ ♔g8 19.♘g5!

The knight is on its way to be relocated to d6 or f6, via e4-square.

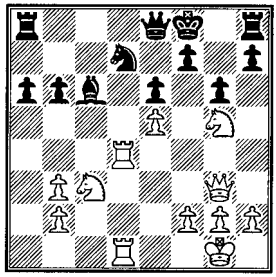
19...♗f8

The activity of the white rooks compared to the black rooks is obvious and Black is short of good moves. The main alternative was 19...♖d8 20.♖gd4 (20.b4!? ♘b8 21.♖×d8 ♕×d8 22.♖f4 ♕d2 23.h4+−) 20...♘c5 21.♖×d8 ♗×d8 22.b4 ♘d7 23.♕f4+−.

20.♗×f8 ♔×f8

There is no salvation with 20...♘×f8 21.♖f4+−.

21.♖gd4 ♗c6 (D)



22.♖f4! f5

Black was lost anyway: 22...♘×e5 23.♕e3 +−.

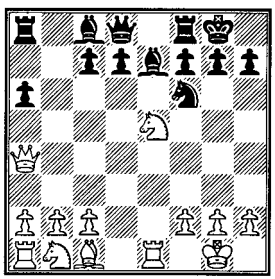
23.e×f6 e5 24.♕d3! 1-0 Black resigned as he will not survive long: 24...e×f4 25.♕d6+ ♔g8 26.f7+.

(18) Chiburdanidze – Grivas

Athens 1984

Ruy Lopez [C84]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.d4 e×d4 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.♖e1 b5 8.e5 ♘×e5 9.♘×e5 b×a4 10.♕×d4 0-0 11.♕×a4 (D)



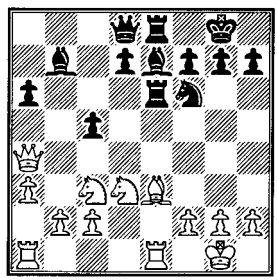
11...♖b8!

An excellent idea, preparing the relocation of the black a8-rook to e6. Black's plan consist of moves like ...♖b6-e6, ...♖e8, ...♗b7 and then pushing his central pawns. But White has also to be concerned about another ...♖b4-h4, with an attack. This idea was first played by Wolfgang Unzicker back in 1950 and from then Black has scored heavily in this position.

12.a3

The other option is 12.♘c3 ♖b4 13.♕a5 ♗b7 14.f3 ♖h4 15.♘d3 ♗d6 as in Galkin-Yemelin, St Petersburg 1994, when Black's attack is strong.

12...♖b6 13.♘c3 ♖e6 14.♗f4 ♗b7 15.♘d3 c5! 16.♗e3 ♖e8 (D)



Black is about to conclude his plan, so White must act.

17.b4?

But not like that! 17.♗g5! ∞ was White's only acceptable move.

17...c×b4 18.a×b4 ♕c7! 19.♘e2 ♗d6

And Black's attack is strong as all his forces are well focused on the white king.

20.♘g3 ♘e4 21.♗d4 ♘×g3 22.h×g3 ♗×g3! 23.♖×e6 ♖×e6 24.♘c5

White cannot accept the "sacrifice": 24.f×g3 ♕×g3 −+.

24...♗h2+?

Good enough was 24...♖g6! 25.♕×d7 (25.♘×b7 ♕×b7 −+) 25...♗h2+ 26.♔f1 ♗×g2+ 27.♔e2 ♕×d7 28.♘×d7 ♖d6 29.♗e5 ♖e6 30.f4 ♗×f4 31.♔f2 ♗×e5 32.♘×e5 ♗e4 −+.

25.♔f1 ♖e7 26.♕a5 ♗d5?!

26...♕c8! preserving the queens would still finish off White quickly.

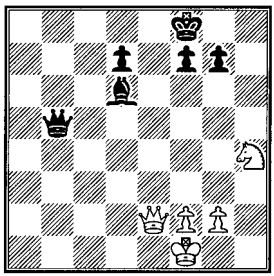
27.♕×a6 h5 28.c4?

28.♖d1! would still keep White in the game.

28...♕f4! 29.c×d5 ♕×d4 30.♘d3 h4 31.♖e1 ♖×e1+ 32.♘×e1 ♕×d5?!

32...♕×b4!∓

33.♕e2 ♗d6 34.b5 ♔f8 35.♘f3 ♕b3 36.♘×h4 ♕b1+ 37.♕e1 ♕×b5+ 38.Qe2 (D)



Black has an extra pawn, but the reduced material and the fact that (almost) all the pawns are on one side of the board (and thus the white knight may prove more useful than the black bishop) allows White to hope for a draw.

38...♕×e2+?

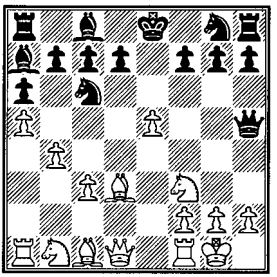
A serious error, after which Black can no longer hope to win the game. After the exchange of queens the material is further reduced, while the white king has been freed to participate in the defense. After, for example, 38...♕d5!, Black can continue the fight for victory.

39.♔×e2 ♗c5 40.♘f3 ♔e7 41.♘e5 ½-½

The black d-pawn will be efficiently immobilized on the d4-square (by ♔e2 and ♘d3). If we were to reverse the minor pieces (i.e., give White a bishop and Black a knight) then the position is winning for Black.

(19) Saverymuttu – Van den Berg
Arosa 1972
Scotch Game [C44]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 e×d4 4.♗c4 ♗c5 5.c3 d3 6.b4 ♗b6 7.0-0 ♕f6 8.e5 ♕f5 9.a4 a6 10.♗×d3 ♕h5 11.a5 ♗a7 (D)



12.♖a4!

Very strong. Now White threatens 13.b5 a×b5 14.♖h4, trapping the queen!

12...♘ce7

What else? If 12...♘ge7, then 13.b5 a×b5 (13...♘×e5 14.♘×e5 ♕×e5 15.♖e1 ♕f6 16.♖f4 ♕d6 17.♖fe4+–) 14.♖h4+–.

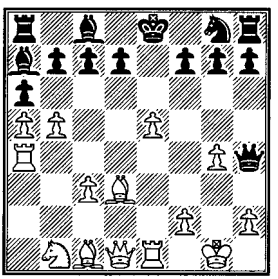
13.b5 ♘g6 14.g4!

The rook on a4 also supports this decisive advance!

14...♕h3 15.♖e1

Not bad, but 15.b6 c×b6 16.a×b6 ♗×b6 17.♘g5 ♕h4 18.♕b3 was curtains. Now White threatens 16.♗f1+–.

15...♘h4 16.♘×h4 ♕×h4 (D)



Now a small tactic finishes Black off:

17.b6! c×b6 18.g5 ♕h3 19.e6!

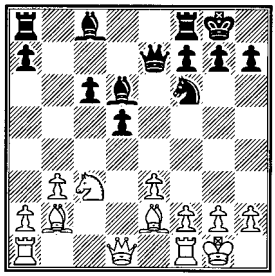
Cutting-off Black's queen retreat.

19...d×e6 20.♖e3 1-0

(20) Lobjanidze – Nadanian
Pasanauri 1997
Queen's Gambit Declined [D32]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c5 4.c×d5 e×d5 5.♘f3 ♘c6 6.e3 ♘f6

7.♗e2 c×d4 8.♘×d4 ♗d6 9.0-0 0-0 10.♘×c6 b×c6 11.b3 ♕e7 12.♗b2 (D)



This is a typical position with hanging pawns. White has the better pawn structure but Black has the initiative and a potential attack.

12...♖b8!?

The rook joins the attack via b4!

13.♗f3

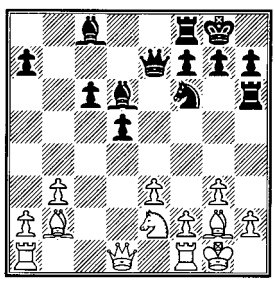
Asanov-Nadanian, Moscow 2003 continued 13.♕c2 ♖b4 14.g3 ♗h3 15.♖fe1 ♖e8 16.♗a3 ♖b7=.

13...♖b4 14.♘e2?!

The main alternative is 14.g3 when it seems that Black can still continue with his original plan, 14...♖h4!?, after which White should play 15.♘b5! (15.g×h4? ♕e5 16.♖e1 ♗h3−+; 15.♘e2 ♖h6 16.♖c1 ♗d7∞; 15.♘×d5 ♘×d5 16.♗×d5 c×d5 17.g×h4 ♗×h2+ 18.♔×h2 ♕×h4+=) 15...c×b5 16.g×h4 ♗h3 17.♗g2! (17.♖e1?! ♗b8 18.♗g2 ♕c7 19.f4 ♗×g2 20.♔×g2 ♘e4∞/=) 17...♗×g2 18.♔×g2 ♕e4+ 19.♕f3 ♕×h4 20.h3 ♘e4! 21.♕g4 (21.♖ad1 f5∞/= 22.♖×d5? ♘g5−+) 21...♕h6 22.♕f5! ♕h4 23.♖ad1 g6 24.♕g4 ♕e7 25.♖×d5 f5 26.♕d1 b4 when Black has compensation for the sacrificed exchange as a result of the weakened white king's position.

Another option is 14.♖e1 ♖h4 15.g3 when Black can ignore the threat on his rook and play 15...♘g4! 16.♗×g4 (16.g×h4? ♕×h4 17.♕d2 ♕×h2+ 18.♔f1 ♗a6+−+) 16...♖×g4 (16...♗×g4? 17.♕d4 ♕g5 18.♘b5! c×b5 19.g×h4 ♕g6 20.♕×d5±) 17.e4 ♕h4! 18.e×d5 ♗×g3 19.h×g3 ♖×g3+ 20.f×g3 ♕×g3+=. But it seems that Black can delay the rook transfer and try to attack White's kingside with the thematic 14...h5!? 15.♗a3 (15.♗×h5? ♘×h5 16.♕×h5 ♗g4−+) 15...♖b7 16.♗×d6 ♕×d6∞.

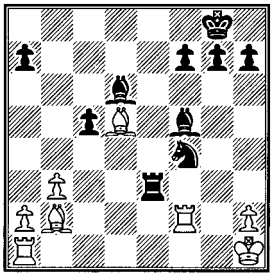
14...♖h4! 15.g3 ♖h6 16.♗g2 (D)



16...♗a6?!

The bishop should not have been taken off the c8-h3 diagonal. After 16...♘g4! 17.h3 (17.♘d4? ♖×h2! [17...♘×h2? 18.♘×c6 ♕g5 19.♖e1 ♗g4 20.f4 ♕h5 21.♕×d5 ♕×d5 22.♗×d5 ♘f3+ 23.♗×f3 ♗×f3 24.♘e5 ♗e4∞/=] 18.♘×c6 ♕g5 19.♕d4 ♕h6−+) 17...♘f6! (the continuation 17...♘×e3?! 18.f×e3 ♕×e3+ 19.♖f2 is dubious but 17...♘e5 is perfectly playable) 18.h4 ♘g4 Black would stand better. The game is now complicated but unimportant for our theme from now on.

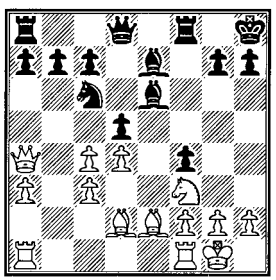
17.♖e1 ♕d7 18.♕c2 ♘e4 19.f3 ♘g5 20.♘d4 ♗c8 21.f4 ♘h3+ 22.♔h1 c5 23.♘f3 ♕g4 24.♘h4 ♖×h4 25.g×h4 ♗f5 26.♕e2 ♕×h4 27.♗×d5 ♖e8 28.♖f1 ♘×f4 29.♕f2 ♕×f2 30.♖×f2 ♖×e3 (D)



31.♖af1 ♗h3 32.♗c1 ♘×d5 33.♗×e3 ♘×e3 34.♖e1 ♘f5 35.♖e8+ ♗f8 36.♖c2 ♘d6 37.♖×f8+ ♔×f8 38.♖×c5 ♗c8 39.♔g1 ♗b7 40.♖c7 ♔e8 41.b4 ♔d8 42.♖c5 ♔d7 43.b5 f5 44.h4 h6 45.a4 g5 46.h×g5 h×g5 47.a5 g4 48.♖e5 ♗e4 49.a6 ♘c4 50.♖c5 ♘b6 51.♖c1 g3 52.♖d1+ ♔e6 53.♖d8 f4 54.♖e8+ ♔f5 55.♖f8+ ♔e5 56.♖f7 ♔d4 57.♖×a7 f3 58.♖f7 ♔e3 0-1

(21) Karpov – Seirawan
Brussels 1986
Petroff Defense [C42]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘×e5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘×e4 5.d4 d5 6.♗d3 ♗e7 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.c4 ♘b4 9.♗e2 ♗e6 10.♘c3 0-0 11.♗e3 f5 12.a3 ♘×c3 13.b×c3 ♘c6 14.♕a4 f4 15.♗d2 ♔h8 (D)



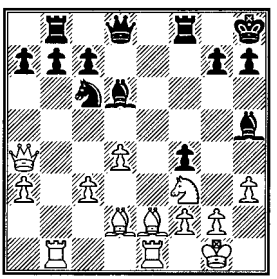
16.♖ab1!

The rook is nicely placed on the semi-open file and is getting ready to go further into Black's camp...

16...♖b8 17.♖fe1 d×c4 18.♗×c4 ♗g4 19.♗e2 ♗d6?!

Later on, and as a result of White's continuation, Black improved with 19...a6! 20.h3 ♗h5 21.♖a1 (21.♘g5? ♗×e2 22.♘e6 ♕d5 23.♖×e2 f3! 24.♖ee1 f×g2 25.♘×f8 ♖×f8-+ Rohde-Seirawan, Estes Park 1986) 21...♗d6 22.♕c2 b5 23.♘e5 ♘×e5 24.♗×h5 ♘c4 25.♗c1 ♕h4 26.♗f3 ♖be8= Ramesh-Konguvel, Kasaragod 1996.

20.h3 ♗h5 (D)



21.♖b5!

Here it comes! White plans to exchange the defending black f8-rook and take advantage of Black's weak kingside, while he exerts pressure on Black's light-square bishop.

21...♗e8

Preferable was 21...♗g6 although White, with 22.c4±, would be happy, as there would be no more pressure on his knight.

22.♕c2 a6

Black's problems would not be solved by 22...♗g6 23.♗d3! ♗×d3 24.♕×d3± as the threats ♖h5 or ♘g5 are strong.

23.♖f5!

Now, after the exchange of rooks, Black's kingside (and especially the f4-pawn) would be rather weak.

23...♖×f5

Or 23...♗g6?! 24.♖×f8+ ♕×f8 25.♗d3! ♗×d3 26.♕×d3 ♖e8 27.♖×e8 ♕×e8 28.c4+-.

24.♕×f5 ♗g6 25.♕g4 ♕f6 26.♗c4 ♖f8

26...♗f5 27.♕g5 ♕×g5 28.♘×g5 ±

27.a4 ♗c2 28.♕h5 h6

28...♗×a4?! 29.♘g5 h6 30.♘f7+ ♔h7 31.♖e6! +−

29.♖e8! ♗f5

29...♗×a4 30.♖e6! ♕f5 31.♕×f5 ♖×f5 32.♘h4+−

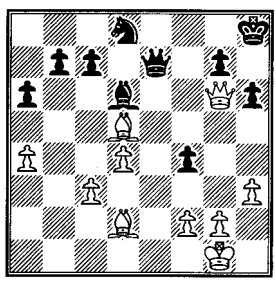
30.♗d5! ♗d7 31.♖×f8+ ♕×f8

31...♗×f8 32.♘e5+−

32.♘h4 ♗e8 33.♕e2

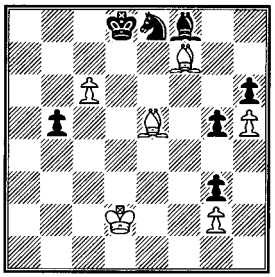
33.♘g6+?! ♗×g6 34.♕×g6 ♘e7 +=

33...♘d8 34.♕e4 ♕e7 35.♘g6+ ♗×g6 36.♕×g6 (D)



And White converted his advantage later, although not without the help of Black, as he committed some inaccuracies along the way.

36...c6 37.♗b3 b5 38.♔f1 ♕f8 39.♗c2 ♔g8 40.♗b3+ ♔h8 41.h4 ♘b7 42.c4 ♕g8 43.♕d3 ♕h7 44.♔e2 g5 45.c5 ♗c7 46.a×b5 a×b5 47.h5 ♗a5 48.♗c1 ♕e7+ 49.♔d1 ♕e1+ 50.♔c2 ♕×f2+ 51.♔b1 ♕g3 52.♕×g3 f×g3 53.♔c2 ♔g7 54.d5 ♘×c5 55.♗b2+ ♔f8 56.d×c6 ♘a6 57.♗a3+ ♔e8 58.♗e6 ♗b4 59.♗b2 ♗f8 60.♗d7+ ♔d8 61.♗e5 ♘b4+ 62.♔d2 ♘d5 63.♗e6 ♘c7 64.♗f7 ♘e8 (D)



65.♗×e8 ♔×e8 66.♗f6 g4 67.♔c3 ♗d6 68.♗g7 ♗f4 69.♔b4 ♔d8 70.♔×b5 ♔c7 71.♔c5 ♗e3+ 72.♔d5 ♗f4 73.♗f8 ♔b6 74.♗d6 ♗g5 75.♗×g3 1-0

Conclusion

Imagination is an important asset for the advanced chessplayer. One should not be simple-minded, following just "natural" potential moves but should try to be "objective" and try to find new ways of development. An active rook should be able to be used not only along a semi-open file (the easy way) but should be sometimes transferred via it to another important part of the board, where the "real" battle will take place. But of course a rook itself has nothing to decide; this is an obligation of the smart and imaginative chessplayer! Try to be one of them!

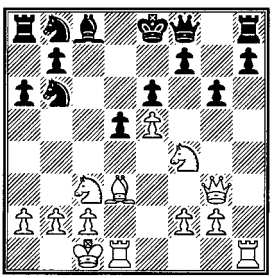
Sacrifices for the Initiative

Concept

The initiative is an important component in modern chess. The only problem is that your opponent is not likely to hand it over to you for free! So, sacrifices of all kinds may be needed to sustain it. In this respect, the next two games are typical, in which, aided by superior development, diagonals and lines are sought to be opened.

(22) Bogoljubow – Spielmann
Stockholm 1919
French Defense [C14]

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗e7 5.e5 ♘fd7 6.h4 ♗×g5 7.h×g5 ♕×g5 8.♘h3 ♕e7 9.♘f4 a6 10.♕g4 g6 11.0-0-0 c5 12.♕g3 ♘b6 13.d×c5 ♕×c5 14.♗d3 ♕f8 (D)



Here White has finished his development (in the cost of only a pawn), while Black still has a long way to go. But the position is of a semi-blocked character, so it is not easy for White to benefit by his superior development. Lines and diagonals should be opened...

15.♗e4!

Now White is ready to sacrifice on d5, opening up the position.

15...d×e4

If Black declines the sacrifice with 15...♘c6, then 16.♗×d5! follows: 16...♘×d5 17.♘c×d5 e×d5 18.♘×d5 and Black is busted.

16.♘×e4 ♘8d7 17.♕h4?

But this is not correct. Better was 17.♕c3 ♕e7?! (17...a5 18.♘d6+ ♔d8 19.♕f3±) 18.♘f6+ ♘×f6 19.e×f6 ♕f8 20.♕c7 ♘d7 21.♘d5! e×d5 22.♖he1+ ♘e5 23.♖×e5+ ♗e6 24.♔b1 ♖d8 25.♖d×d5 ♖×d5 26.♖×d5 ♗×d5 27.♕c8#; even better is 17.♘d6+ ♔d8 18.♘h3! ♔c7 19.♘g5+–. It is clear that the extra black piece is of no help for Black, as his inferior development in an open position is decisive.

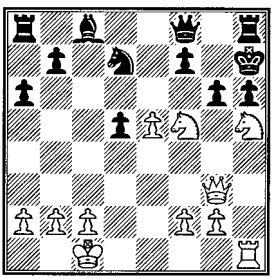
17...♕e7 18.♘d6+ ♔f8 19.♕h6+ ♔g8 20.♘h5 ♕f8 21.♕f4 ♘d5 22.♖×d5

Having said "A," we have to say "B." Material is not tallied when on the attack with the initiative. If the black rooks come to life, then White will resign; if not, he will win!

22...e×d5 23.♘f5?

Another bad move. White should proceed with 23.♖h3 a5 24.♖f3∞/=.

23...h6! 24.♕g3 ♔h7? (D)



In the heat of battle Black returns the favor. He could achieve a winning position with 24...♕e8 25.♖e1 ♕e6.

25.♘hg7?

White missed his last chance. He could have drawn by 25.♕g5! ♔g8 26.♘e7+ ♔h7 27.♘f5=.

25...♘c5?

A series of inaccuracies. Black could have won by 25...♘×e5! 26.♖×h6+ ♔g8 27.♕×e5 ♖×h6 28.♘×h6+ ♔h7–+.

26.♕g5?

Black's text move gave White the opportunity to draw again by 26.♖×h6+ ♔g8 27.♖×h8+ ♔×h8 28.♘e8!! ♕×e8 29.♕h4+ ♔g8 30.♘e7+ ♔f8 31.♕h8+ ♔×e7 32.♕f6+=.

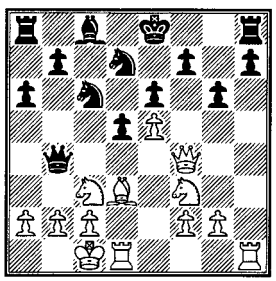
26...♔g8 27.♘×h6+ ♖×h6 28.♖×h6 ♘e6 29.♘×e6 ♗×e6 and Black wins: **30.♖×g6+ f×g6 31.♕×g6+ ♔h8 32.♕×e6 ♖e8 33.♕h3+ ♔g8 34.♕e3 ♕g7 35.f4 ♕×g2 0-1**

White resigned as now the black

extra rook does count. White's sacrifice was correct and could have been effective, but he went astray.

(23) Grischuk – Brynell
Germany 2002
French Defense [C14]

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗e7 5.e5 ♘fd7 6.h4 ♗×g5 7.h×g5 ♕×g5 8.♕d3 g6 9.♘f3 ♕e7 10.0-0-0 a6 11.♕e3 c5 12.d×c5 ♕×c5 13.♕f4 ♘c6 14.♗d3 ♕b4 (D)



Grischuk is a fantastic attacking player so this variation used by Alekhine perfectly suits his aggressive style.

15.♗e4!

So, here comes again – a very strong move which is poses Black serious problems. Grischuk had certainly carefully studied Bogoljubow's idea.

15...d×e4

It seems that Black is forced to accept the "gift" since 16.♖×d5 was threatened: 15...b5 16.♖×d5! e×d5 17.♘×d5 ♕a5 18.e6 f×e6 19.♗×g6+ ♔d8 20.♕g5+ +– or 15...♖a7 16.♖×d5! e×d5 17.♘×d5 ♕f8 18.♘c7+ ♔d8 19.e6+–.

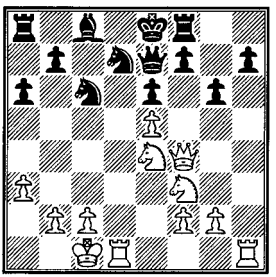
16.♘×e4 ♖f8?!

More stubborn was 16...♔d8!? 17.♕×f7 (17.a3!? ♕e7 18.♘d6 ♔c7 19.♘×f7 ♖f8 20.♖×h7 ±) 17...♕e7 18.♘fg5 ♔c7 19.♕×e7 ♘×e7 20.♘f7 ♖g8 21.♖×h7 ♘f8 22.♖h3 though White maintains an extremely strong initiative even with the queens off the board.

17.a3

17.♘fg5 seems to be equally strong: 17...♔d8 18.a3 ♕e7 19.♖×h7 ±.

17...♕e7 (D)



Or 17...♕a5 18.♕h4 ♘e7 19.♘d6+ ♔d8 20.♘g5 ♔c7 21.♘×h7 +–.

18.♕e3

Not letting the black king escape to c7; but stronger was 18.♖×h7 ♔d8 19.♘d6 ♔c7 20.♘g5 ±.

18...♖h8

The best defense, as alternatives do not help: 18...f5 19.e×f6 ♖×f6 20.♘fg5! h5 21.g4! +– or 18...♔d8 19.♕b6+ ♔e8 20.♖×d7 +–.

19.♘fg5 ♘d×e5

Nothing would have been changed by the capture with the other knight: 19...♘c×e5 20.♘×h7 ♖g8 21.♕c3 f5 22.♖×d7! ♘×d7 23.♘hf6+ ♘×f6 24.♘×f6+ ♔f7 25.♘×g8 +– and Black is helpless.

20.♘×h7 ♖×h7 21.♖×h7 ♕f8 22.♘f6+ 1-0

Black resigned: 22...♔e7 23.♕g5 +–.

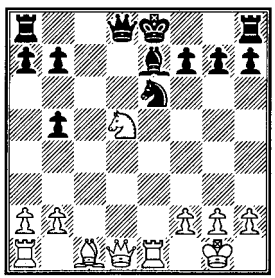
A small sacrifice of a pawn for a long-term initiative is a common occurrence in modern chess. There have been numerous games in which this technique has been implemented and while results were nearly equally divided, it looks easier to play with the initiative

than with the pawn. This more or less happens as a result of human nature; it is easier and more pleasant to attack than to defend...

Of course, when we come to engines, then the results could be easily opposite, as they tend to be quite stubborn and nearly always find the best defense. Ultimately, it is more likely that the human will crack first!

(24) Leko – Gelfand
Nalchik 2009
Petroff Defense [C42]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘×e5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘×e4 5.d4 d5 6.♗d3 ♘c6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.♖e1 ♗g4 9.c4 ♘f6 10.♘c3 ♗×f3 11.♕×f3 ♘×d4 12.♕d1 ♘e6 13.c×d5 ♘×d5 14.♗b5+ c6 15.♘×d5 c×b5 (D)



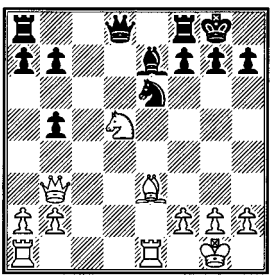
This variation, which had been long considered to be drawish, came into the limelight recently, after Kramnik was defeated twice with it.

16.♕b3

16.♗f4 was Naiditsch-Kramnik, Dortmund 2008 and 16.♕h5 Ivanchuk-Kramnik, Dortmund 2008.

16...0-0 17.♗e3 (D)

One famous game continued 17.♘×e7+ ♕×e7 18.♕×b5. White has recovered the pawn, but after releasing the tension it will be virtually impossible to prove the bishop's superiority



over the knight. Black is too well developed: 18...a6 19.♕b3 ♖fd8 20.♗e3 ♖ac8 21.♖ac1 h6 22.h3 ♘d4 ½-½ Kasparov-Karpov Moscow 1985.

17...♗c5

This natural move will lead to the radical activation of White's forces, but it is not easy to find a clear path to equality: 17...♖e8 18.♕×b5 (18.♖ad1 ♕a5) 18...♗c5 19.♖ad1±.

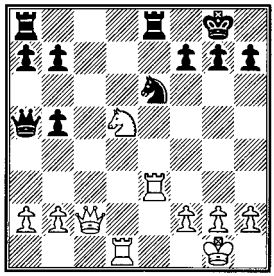
18.♖ad1 ♗×e3 19.♖×e3

This is better than 19.♕×e3 ♕h4 20.g3 ♕c4 21.b3 ♕c5 22.♕×c5 ♘×c5 23.♘c7 ♖ad8 24.♘×b5 ♖×d1 25.♖×d1 a6= Momeni-Aryanejad, Iran 1995. "Black's extra pawn does not really count yet (not as a positive factor, at least; see the comment to Black's 20th move). White is several tempi ahead with the mobilization of forces. His central knight paralyzes Black, while the rook can create dangerous threats along the third rank." – M.Marin.

19...♕a5

Probably Black's best. The alternatives are: 19...a6 20.f4± and 19...♖c8 20.f4 ♔h8 21.f5 ♘c5 22.♕×b5 ♖e8 23.♘c3 ♖×e3 24.♖×d8+ ♖×d8 25.♕×c5 ♖e1+ 26.♔f2 ♖c1 27.♕e7 ♖c2+ 28.♔f3 ♖cd2 29.♕×f7 ♖2d3+ 30.♔e4 1-0 Milos-Samhouri, Khanty Mansiysk 2010.

20.♕c2! ♖fe8 (D)



Black has to be careful: 20...♖ac8? 21.♘e7+ ♔h8 22.♕×h7+! ♔×h7 23.♖h3#. "In the absence of the b5-pawn, Black could play 20...♖fd8 (?? in the current position), putting some pressure on the central knight, with reasonable chances to hold the position. The way it is, 21.♖a3! +− traps the queen. It is instructive to notice that in these two lines, the members of the black Royal Family are trapped on the edge of the board with the help of the same mechanism (white knight + rook and a black pawn). This speaks volumes about the huge activity displayed by White's pieces as well as Black's lack of coordination." – M.Marin.

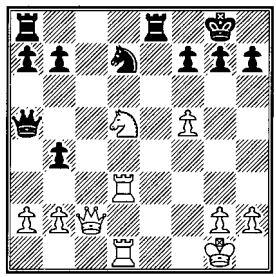
21.f4!

As we have already seen in previous variations, this is White's main threat. The black knight on e6 is perfectly located, and now it may be forced to move. Also, there is the possibility of f5-f6, attacking the black king's castled position.

21...b4 22.f5 ♘f8 23.♖ed3!

The text move expands the horizons and possibilities for this variation to be successful. White avoids the exchange and creates such strong threats as ♘c7 or f6. 23.♘e7+ was seen in two of Gelfand's games: 23...♔h8 24.♕c4 ♘e6 25.♘d5 ♕c5 (25...♖ad8 26.♖ee1 ♕c5+ 27.♕×c5 ♘×c5 28.♖×e8+ ♖×e8 29.♘×b4 g6 30.f×g6 ½-½ Svidler-Gelfand, Moscow 2009) 26.♕×b4 ♕×b4 27.♘×b4 ♘c5 28.♘d5 ♖×e3 29.♘×e3 h5 30.f6 ♘e4 31.f×g7+ ♔×g7 32.♔f1 ½-½ Radjabov-Gelfand, Bazna 2009.

23...♘d7 (D)



This move looks logical, because it prepares the recycling of the knight, but Black is not sufficiently well developed and White will win almost by force. I think it would be preferable to play 23...♖e5 24.f6 ♖ae8 which was seen in Georgiadis-Muheim, Graechen 2009 (½-½), although White has a pleasant position after 25.h3. Of course, only tournament tests will reveal the truth...

24.♕c7!

A nice maneuver. 24.♘c7? would have failed to 24...♘c5! (24...b3? 25.♕c3! ±) 25.♘×e8 ♘×d3 26.♘f6+ g×f6 27.♕×d3 ♕c5+ 28.♔h1 a5 ∓.

24...♕c5+

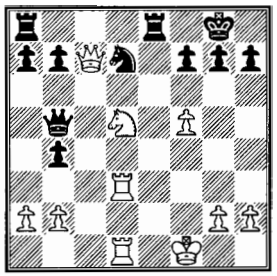
24...♕b5 did not prove sufficient after 25.♕g3 ♘e5 26.♘f6+ ♔f8 27.♘×h7+ ♔g8 28.♘f6+ ♔f8 29.♘×e8 ♘×d3 30.♘×g7 ♕c5+ 31.♔f1 ♘×b2 32.♘e6+ f×e6 33.f6 ♕f5+ 34.♔g1 ♕h7 35.♕d6+ ♔g8 36.♕×e6+ ♔h8 37.♖f1 ♕h6 38.♕b3 ♖d8 39.♕×b2 ♕e3+ 40.♔h1 ♕c3 41.♕f2 ♔g8 42.♕f5 ♔f8 43.♕h7 1-0 Ganguly-Pourkashiyan, Chalkida 2010.

25.♔f1

White's almost complete domination allows him to utilize the king for

the purpose of protecting the back rank. 25.♔h1 ♕f2! would only help Black.

25...♕b5 (D)



26.♕g3!

By switching the queen to the kingside, White renews the threats of ♘c7 and f6.

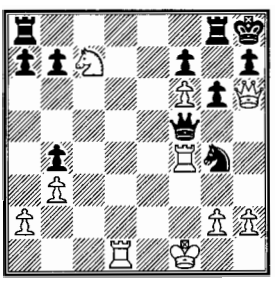
26...♘e5?!

26...♖ac8 may have been more tenacious, but after 27.f6 g6 28.♘e7+ (28.♘c7? ♖×c7! 29.♕×c7 ♘c5) 28...♖×e7 29.f×e7 ♘e5 30.♔f2 ♘×d3+ 31.♕×d3, Black's position remains unpleasant because of the strong passed e7-pawn. 26...♖ad8?! does not help either: 27.f6 g6 28.♘c7 ♕f5+ 29.♕f3 +−.

27.f6 g6 28.♕g5 ♔h8 29.♕h6 ♖g8 30.♘c7 ♕c4

For the second time in this game, Black faces the threat of ♕×h7+!. Therefore, he has to keep the d3-rook pinned (30...♕c6? 31.♕×h7+!), or the h3-square under control.

31.b3 ♕g4 32.♖d4 ♕f5+ 33.♖f4 ♘g4 (D)



If 33...♕c2?, then the usual 34.♕×h7+! comes and if 33...♕h5, then 34.♕×h5 g×h5 35.♘×a8+−.

34.♕g7+!

White simplifies to a won ending with an extra knight.

34...♖×g7 35.f×g7+ ♔×g7 36.♖×f5 g×f5 37.♘×a8 ♘e3+ 38.♔e2 ♘×d1 39.♔×d1 ♔f6 40.♔d2 ♔e5 41.♘c7 f4 42.♔d3 a6 43.♘a8 1-0

Conclusion

The initiative should not be handed over "free of charge," as our opponent should not be our cooperative friend – at least this should not happen often and not without a weak move or a bad opening by our opponent. So, sacrifices for the initiative should be on the daily menu but they should be handled with care and with a strong positional foundation. Non-standard combinations are based on sound positional domination grounds and they crown our ideas and plans, resulting in nice points!

The Central Strike

Concept

One of the less acknowledged and analyzed strategic/tactical elements is the so-called "central strike." This concept refers to the unexpected advance of a central pawn or pawns, temporarily disrupting the flow of the position. Its aim is destruction or domination of the opponent's pawn center or pawn chain.

The element of the central strike is of a short-term nature and, while initially giving rise to a multitude of dynamic continuations, it eventually resolves itself, becoming stable, following the expected central clarification. Taking into account that the situation

in the center is the basic point of reference for both sides' plans, such a violent mutation may force a reassessment of the situation or even fundamentally reshape the position.

It has often been observed that after the execution of a central strike, one's opponent temporarily lies in a state of shock, as this violent attempt to disturb the existing situation causes immense psychological pressure.

(25) Grivas – Svetushkin
Athens 2001
English Opening [A11]

1.c4 c6 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d5 4.e3 ♘bd7

This seems more accurate than 4...e6 as Black retains the option of 5...e5. After 4...e6 5.b3 ♗d6 6.♗b2 0-0 7.d4 (7.♗e2 ♘bd7 8.0-0 ♕e7 9.♕c2 ♖e8 10.♖fd1 d×c4 11.♗×c4 b5 12.♗f1 ♗b7 13.a4 a6 14.♘e4 ♘×e4 15.♕×e4 e5 16.d4 is unclear, Grivas-Mastrovasilis, Athens 2001) 7...♘bd7 8.♗e2 ♖e8 (8...♘e4!? 9.♘×e4 d×e4 10.♘d2 f5 11.0-0 ♕e7 12.c5 ♗c7 13.♘c4 is unclear, Grivas-Khenkin, Albania 1996; 8...a6 9.0-0 d×c4 10.b×c4 c5 11.a4± Grivas-Mastrovasilis, Ikaria 1997) 9.0-0 a6 10.♕c2 d×c4 11.b×c4 e5 12.a4 ♕e7 13.a5 e4 14.♘d2 ♘f8 15.c5 ♗c7 16.♘c4 ♘g4 the position is unclear, Grivas-Mastrovasilis, Thessaloniki 1998.

5.♕c2

The evaluation of 5.b3 e5 is a matter of personal taste.

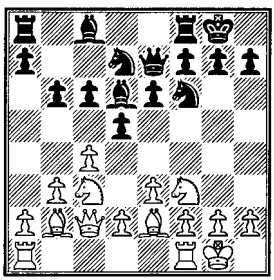
5...e6

5...e5? 6.c×d5 ♘×d5 (6...c×d5? 7.♘b5!) 7.a3 leads to a favorable "Sicilian Defense" type of position with reversed colors. If Black is determined to play ...e5 then he should insert 5...a6!?.

6.b3 ♗d6 7.♗b2 0-0 8.♗e2 ♕e7

Another option for Black is 8...a6 9.d4 ♕e7 (9...e5 10.c×d5 c×d5 11.d×e5 ♘×e5 12.0-0±) 10.0-0 d×c4 11.b×c4 e5 12.a4, with unclear play.

9.0-0 b6?! (D)



9...♖e8 or 9...a6 was to be preferred. The move ...b6 is good when White has already played d4.

10.c×d5! c×d5?!

A second consecutive inaccuracy by Black, who should have accepted a slightly worse position after 10...♘×d5. Note that 10...e×d5 is even worse because of 11.♘d4! ♗b7 12.♘f5!.

11.♘b5! ♗a6 12.♖fc1

White treats the position accurately. Since the main conflict will take place on the queenside, the white pieces are transferred to the battlefield without interrupting their mutual coverage, simultaneously freeing a path for the queen's retreat.

12...♖fc8 13.♕d1 ♗c5

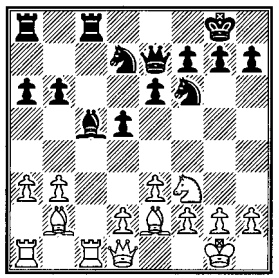
Black does not wish to surrender the bishop pair. 13...♗×b5 14.♗×b5 ♗a3 15.♗×a3 ♕×a3 16.♘d4! a6 17.♗c6 ♖ab8 18.♗×d7! ♘×d7 19.♘c6 ♖a8 20.b4! would lead to a distinct superiority for White.

14.a3! ♗×b5

In face of the threat 15.b4, Black

had no choice. Now, however, White obtains the advantage of the two bishops which will prove to be of decisive importance.

15.♗×b5 a6 16.♗e2 (D)



16...b5

Seemingly strong, but in fact it only succeeds in further weakening Black's queenside. 16...a5 is better, though after 17.♗b5 White has the advantage. I would say that in this position Black's main problem is the absence of a decent plan. He is condemned to passivity and defense without much chance for the full point.

17.a4! b×a4

Compulsory, as 17...b4? loses immediately to 18.d4 ♗d6 19.♖×c8+ ♖×c8 20.♗×a6.

18.b×a4 a5 19.♗b5

The b5-bishop's field of action has now grown. The light squares in Black's queenside (and especially c6) are very weak.

19...♗b4 20.♘d4 ♘e5 21.d3!

What a huge difference it would have made if White had mechanically played d4. The b2-bishop would be restricted, the d4-knight would be unable to come across to c6 while the c4-square would become an outpost for a black knight! White is better as he has the two bishops and better-placed pieces, aiming at Black's weakened queenside. Black remains passive, defending White's threats.

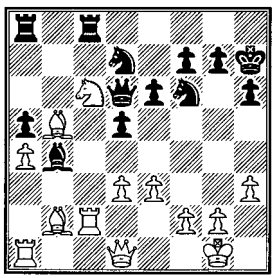
21...♕d6 22.h3

Making *luft* for the king, preventing a future ...♘g4 and also threatening f4.

22...h6 23.♖c2!

White now threatens to wrest control of the c-file as well with 24.♖ac1.

23...♘ed7 24.♘c6 ♔h7 (D)

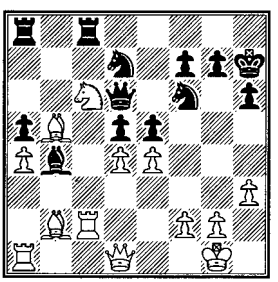


White has a clear advantage and could continue with the simple 25.♖ac1 or with 25.♘×b4. However, my attention was drawn to the possibility of opening up the center...

25.e4! e5

Forced in view of the threatened 26.e5. 25...d×e4? would be refuted simply: 26.d×e4 ♘×e4 27.♘×b4 ♕×b4 28.♗×d7 ♖d8 29.♕g4.

26.d4!! (D)



A powerful central strike, after which Black's position collapses. The black pieces remain uncoordinated and unprepared to react to the explosion in the center.

26...e×d4

Black's alternatives were hardly of any help: after 26...d×e4? 27.d×e5

♕×d1+ 28.♖×d1 he loses a piece while he also loses material in the event of 26...♘×e4 27.d×e5 ♕e6 28.♘d4! ♕e7 29.♗c6!.

27.♘×b4 a×b4?!

Unpleasant as it may have been, 27...♕×b4 28.e×d5 was Black's only chance.

28.♖×c8! ♖×c8 29.♕×d4 ♕c5

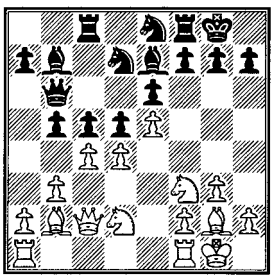
Black submits to his fate as the only move, 29...♘e8, after 30.e×d5, would promise White a slow but certain victory.

30.e5 1-0

The central strike is an old concept; see the following game of the great Mikhail Botvinnik:

(26) Botvinnik – Bisguier
Hastings 1961
English Opening [A14]

1.g3 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♗g2 e6 4.0-0 ♗e7 5.c4 0-0 6.b3 c6 7.♗b2 b5 8.d3 ♘bd7 9.♘bd2 ♗b7 10.♕c2 ♖c8 11.e4 ♕b6 12.e5 ♘e8 13.d4 c5 (D)



Black seems to be doing fine, although his passive e8-knight needs to be relocated. But White is on move and he can set the board on fire...

14.b4!

A pawn sacrifice that allows White to obtain a protected passed pawn.

14...c×b4

Black is forced to accept the challenge, as 14...b×c4?! 15.b×c5 ♕a6 16.♘b1± or 14...d×c4? 15.d×c5 ♕c7 16.a4 a6 17.♘e4+− were unpleasant alternatives.

15.c5 ♕c7 16.♕d3 ♗c6 17.♖fe1

White could consider 17.a3!? a5 (17...b×a3 18.♕×a3 ♖a8 19.♗c3∞/=) 18.a×b4 a4 19.♖fe1±.

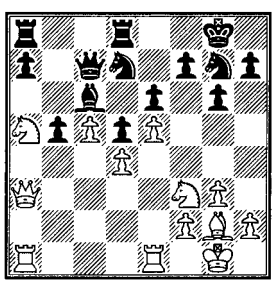
17...g6?!

Black should have played, 17...a5 stopping White's potential activity on the queenside. White has compensation after 18.♘f1∞/= when he will be focused only on the kingside.

18.a3! b×a3 19.♕×a3 ♖a8 20.♗c3 ♗d8 21.♘b3

White's compensation is obvious based on his space advantage and his passed c-pawn. Black can hardly move because of his lack of space.

21...♘g7 22.♗a5 ♕b7 23.♗×d8 ♖f×d8 24.♘a5 ♕c7 (D)



25.♖e2!

With the simple plan of ♘e1-d3-b4 and also tripling the heavy forces on the a-file, winning back the sacrificed pawn. Black is in trouble as he cannot oppose any decent plan.

25...a6 26.♘e1 ♘f5 27.♕c3 b4?

Black is trying to find some counterplay and breathe but he was obliged to hang onto his extra pawn. Good or bad, he had to stay passive with 27...♘b8 28.♘d3 ♘e7 29.♘b4 ♗b7

30.♖ea2±.

28.♕×b4 ♖db8 29.♕c3 ♖b5 30.♖ea2 f6 31.♘×c6

31.f4 f×e5 32.f×e5± was good enough.

31...♕×c6 32.♗f1

Safer was 32.e×f6 ♘×f6 33.♗f1+−.

32...f×e5 33.♗×b5 ♕×b5 34.d×e5

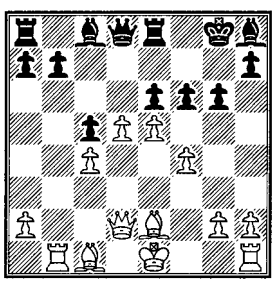
White has won material and the end is near; he only needs to make some exchanges!

34...d4 35.♕d3 ♕×c5 36.♖×a6 ♖×a6 37.♕×a6 ♕×e5 38.♘d3 ♕f6 39.♕c8+ ♘f8 40.♖a8 ♘d6 41.♕d8 ♕×d8 42.♖×d8 ♘b5 43.♘e5 ♔g7 44.♘c6 1-0

The central strike can be used to open lines and diagonals for various beneficial reasons. One of them is to attack the king, as can be seen in the following example:

(27) McCambridge – Hjartarson
Grindavik 1984
Grünfeld Defense [D85]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.c×d5 ♘×d5 5.e4 ♘×c3 6.b×c3 ♗g7 7.♘f3 c5 8.♖b1 0-0 9.♗e2 ♘c6 10.d5 ♘e5 11.♘×e5 ♗×e5 12.♕d2 e6 13.f4 ♗h8 14.c4 ♖e8 15.e5 f6 (D)



This is a theoretical position in which White seems to be doing fine, but his strong pawn center is under fire.

16.f5!?

A full central strike, with the participation of five pawns! White aims to strip the black king and then attack it.

16...g×f5?!

16...f×e5?! probably is not that good: 17.f×g6! (17.f×e6 ♕h4+ 18.♔d1 ♗×e6! 19.♖×b7 ♗c8∞) 17...h×g6 18.0-0 ± but 16...e×d5!? 17.f×g6 h×g6 18.c×d5 ♖×e5 19.0-0∞/= Agzamov-Pribyl, Sochi 1984, is interesting.

17.♖b3

New forces are joining the attack!

17...♖e7

If 17...♗g7?!, then 18.♖g3 f×e5 19.♕h6 ♖e7 20.♗b2 e×d5 21.♗×e5 ♕d7 22.♗f6 ♖f7 23.0-0±.

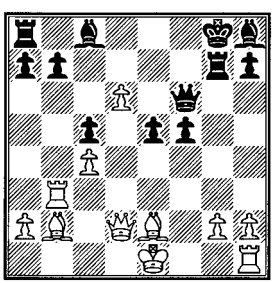
18.d6!

Excellent! There wasn't much in 18.♗b2?! f×e5 19.♕g5+ ♗g7 20.♗×e5 h6!=, Eingorn-Tukmakov, Lvov 1984.

18...♖g7 19.e×f6 ♕×f6

Black's options are limited: 19...♖×g2 20.♔f1! ♖g6 21.♗h5±.

20.♗b2 e5?! (D)



20...♕d8 21.♗×g7 ♗×g7 22.♗f3± was Black's only chance.

21.♗×e5!

A nice combination, but 21.♖e3! was good as well.

21...♕×e5 22.♖e3 ♕e6

Black decided to give up his queen. He could instead win a second piece as well with 22...♕a1+ 23.♔f2 ♕×h1 but he would not be saved after 24.♖e8+ ♔f7 25.♗h5+ ♖g6 26.♗×g6+ ♔×g6

(26...h×g6 27.♖e7+ ♔f6 28.♕c3+ ♔g5 29.♕g3+ ♔f6 30.♕h4+ g5 31.♕h6#) 27.♖g8+ ♔f6 28.♕e3+– and if 22...♕d4, then 23.♖e8+ ♔f7 24.♗h5+ ♖g6 25.♕×d4 ♗×d4 26.d7+–.

23.♖×e6 ♗×e6 24.♕e3 ♖e8 25.♕×c5

And now White wins.

25...♖×g2

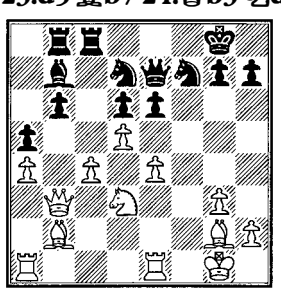
25...b6 26.♕b5 ♖d8 27.c5+–

26.d7 ♖×e2+ 27.♔×e2 ♗×d7+ 28.♔d2 ♗e6 29.♕c7 ♗d4 30.♖b1 ♗b6 31.♕g3+ ♔f7 32.♕h4 ♖d8+ 33.♔c2 ♖d4 34.♕×h7+ ♔f6 35.♕h8+ ♔f7 36.♕h7+ ♔f6 37.♖×b6! ♖×c4+ 38.♔d3 a×b6 39.h4 ♖a4 40.♕h6+ ♔f7 41.h5 f4 42.♕g6+ ♔e7 43.h6 ♖a3+ 44.♔e4 ♖a4+ 45.♔e5 ♖a5+ 46.♔×f4 ♖a4+ 47.♔e3 ♖a3+ 48.♔d4 1-0

Well, the central strike is not always the proper reaction. Here is an instructive example that can prove it:

(28) Smyslov – Chandler
Hastings 1988
Nimzo-Indian Defense [E32]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 e6 3.c4 b6 4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.♕b3 ♕e7 6.a3 ♗×c3+ 7.♕×c3 ♗b7 8.g3 0-0 9.♗g2 d6 10.0-0 ♘bd7 11.b4 ♘e4 12.♕c2 f5 13.♗b2 ♘df6 14.a4 a5 15.b5 ♖ae8 16.♘e1 c6 17.b×c6 ♗×c6 18.f3 ♘g5 19.♘d3 ♘f7 20.♖fe1 ♖b8 21.e4 f×e4 22.f×e4 ♖fc8 23.d5 ♗b7 24.♕b3 ♘d7 (D)



White's advantage is obvious and it is based mostly on his space advantage and the bishop pair. But Black seems to be defending on his three first ranks.

25.e5?

The exchanges that are invited by White cannot be correct. 25.♕b5 would preserve White's advantage.

25...d×e5 26.♘×e5 ♘f×e5 27.♗×e5 ♕c5+! 28.♔h1 ♘×e5 29.♖×e5 e×d5?

After the obvious 29...♕×c4 30.♕×c4 ♖×c4 31.d×e6 ♗×g2+ 32.♔×g2 ♖e8 Black should hold easily.

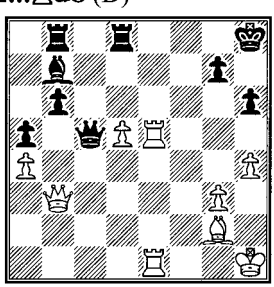
30.c×d5 ♔h8 31.♖ae1

Now White's strong passed pawn and his well-placed rooks will tell in the end.

31...h6 32.h4

32.♕d3! ♖f8 33.♕g6± was stronger.

32...♖d8 (D)



33.♕d3!

White finally found the correct idea; now Black is in deep trouble...

33...♖bc8 34.♕g6 ♖g8 35.♗e4! 1-0

Conclusion

The concept of the central strike is not easy to explain with rules and plans. It is not often encountered and its peculiarities are unique in practically every single game. Nevertheless, I have

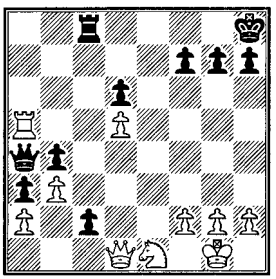
tried to offer a general description with the help of these instructive examples!

Mate on the Back Rank

Concept

Combinations based on our theme can be found in virtually every manual or exercise book. The reader should become familiar with the approximately 30 examples which will help one understand the familiar and repeated motifs which govern the exploitation of the back rank weakness. Of course, back rank mates can be classified more or less according to micro-themes and the pieces that participate in the assault. Chasing the queen protector is a nice way to start. The following five examples have a common idea:

(29) Hoch, 1973 (D)



In this nice study both sides are working with back-rank mate threats. The question is who will prevail in this sharp duel.

1.♕×c2! ♖e8! 2.♕c8!! ♕d7!!

2...♖×c8 3.♖×a4

3.♕c1!

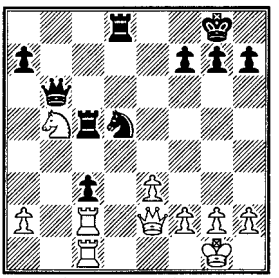
3.♕a8? h6!

3...♕c7 4.♖a8!! 1-0

But not 4.♕e3? ♕d8!.

(30) Bernstein – Capablanca

Moscow 1914 (D)



A classic game, known to most players.

27.♘×c3?

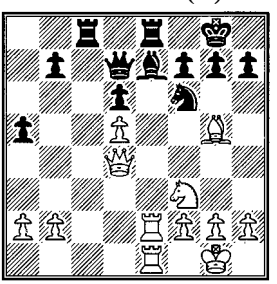
White had to bring his knight back, 27.♘d4, but after 27...♖dc8 (threatening 28...♘b4), Black retains the upper hand, thanks to his dangerous passed pawn at c3.

27...♘×c3 28.♖×c3 ♖×c3 29.♖×c3 ♕b2!!

Evidently, White expected only 29...♕b1+? 30.♕f1 ♕×a2 (30...♖d1?? 31.♖c8+) 31.g3, with a likely draw. But now he had to resign **0-1**

(31) Adams – Torre

New Orleans 1920 (D)



This is one of the most well-known examples of exploiting a weak back rank.

17.♗×f6! ♗×f6?

17...g×f6 was objectively better, although White's position is overwhelming after 18.h3 (18.♖×e7? ♕×e7! [18...♖×e7? 19.♖×e7 ♕×e7 20.♕g4+] 19.♖×e7 ♖c1+ 20.♘e1 ♖×e1+ 21.♖×e1

♖×e1#).

18.♕g4! ♕b5 19.♕c4!! ♕d7 20.♕c7!!

The "hunting" continues!

20...♕b5 21.a4!

The direct 21.♕×b7? is refuted by 21...♕×e2!! 22.♖×e2 ♖c1+ −+. Also no good is 21.♕×a5? ♕×e2! 22.♖×e2 ♖×e2.

21...♕×a4

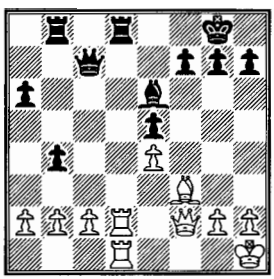
White has an elegant way of getting his rook off the e2-square with tempo:

22.♖e4!

Threatening 23.♕×c8!.

22...♕b5 23.♕×b7! 1-0

(32) Rovner – Kamishov
Moscow 1946 (D)



Another typical example. The black queen is obliged to guard its rooks, and so is overloaded...

1.♕a7! ♕a5

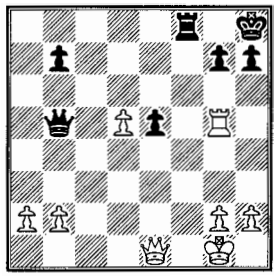
The only move, but now the harvest begins!

2.♕×a6! ♕c7 3.♕a7! 1-0

Black had to resign as he loses too much material or gets mated.

(33) Lowcki – Tartakower
Jurata 1937 (D)

Both back ranks are weak but the white rook is also badly placed and this makes the difference. An experienced



player would easily understand that the game will end by a double attack threatening mate and the rook.

33...♕c5+

Nothing is offered by 33...♕b6+ 34.♔h1 ♕f6 because of 35.h4!.

34.♔h1 ♕c4! 35.♔g1 ♕d4+ 36.♔h1 ♕e4!

It's important to drive the queen away from its best square, e1. Black gets nothing from 36...♕d2? 37.♖×e5 or 36...♕f4 37.h4 or, finally, 36...♕d3 37.♔g1.

37.♕c1

The most stubborn. Black wins after 37.♕d1 ♕f4! or 37.♕g1 ♕e2!.

37...♕d3

Accurate! Bad would be 37...♕e2, as 38.♖f5! would turn the tables!

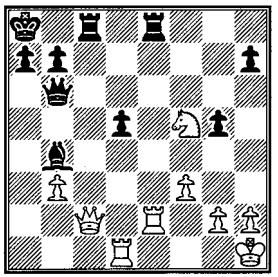
38.♔g1 ♕d4+ 39.♔h1 ♕d2! 0-1

The double attack wins!

Of course, most of the games are quite similar in ideas and the ways the back rank weakness are exploited. But the truth is that the presence of the queens on the board helps.

(34) Teschner – Portisch
Monte Carlo 1969 (D)

Black has won a pawn and White decided that it was time to equalize the material.



29.♖×d5?

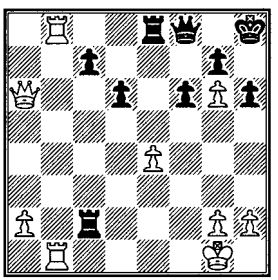
But this was completely wrong. He had to fight with 29.♖c1 ♔b8 30.♖×e8 ♖×e8 31.h3 or 29.♖×e8 ♖×e8 30.h3.

29...♕a6?

Black missed the spectacular and highly effective 29...♕f2!! 30.♘g3 ♕e1+!.

30.♘g3 ♖ed8 31.♖×d8 ♖×d8 32.♖f2 ♕d3 33.♕c7 a6 34.♖f1 h5 35.♕b6 h4 36.♕×b4 h×g3 37.♕c4 g×h2 38.♕×d3 ♖×d3 39.♖b1 ♔a7 40.♔×h2 ♔b6 41.♔h3 ½-½

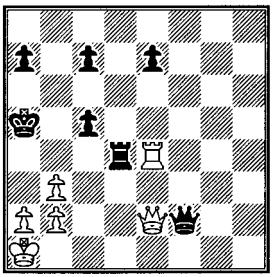
(35) Capablanca – Thomas
Hastings 1919 (D)



29.♕a8? 1-0

The text move "forced" Black to resign, when in fact he could have saved himself by 29...♖×a2!. White could have won by 29.♖×e8 ♕×e8 30.♕a4! (the usual deflection) 30...♖×g2+ (30...♖c1+ 31.♔f2) 31.♔×g2 ♕×g6+ 32.♔h1 but even clearer was 29.♕b5! ♖×b8 (29...c6 30.♖×e8 ♕×e8 31.♕b8 ♖c1+ 32.♔f2; 29...♖c1+ 30.♔f2 ♖×b1 31.♖×e8) 30.♕×b8 ♔g8 and now 31.♕b3+ or 31.♕a7.

(36) Rakolta – Janoczy
Czechoslovakia 1978 (D)



Both kings are in trouble, so White on the move must act.

1.b4+! ♔b6

The pawn cannot be captured either by the king or the rook because of 2.♕×f2. And on 1...c×b4, 2.♖e5+ wins, and finally, 1...♔a4 loses the queen after 2.♕a6+ ♔×b4 3.a3+ ♔b3 4.♕b5+ ♔c2 (4...♖b4 5.♕d3+) 5.♖e2+.

2.b×c5+ ♔b7

2...♔c6 doesn't help: 3.♕a6+ ♔d7 (3...♔d5 4.♕e6+ ♔×c5 5.♖e5+ ♔b4 6.♕b3#) 4.♕e6+ ♔d8 5.♕g8+! ♔d7 6.♕g4+ ♔c6 7.♖×d4.

3.c6+ ♔a8!

But now Black's back rank is also very weak and White is on the move!

4.♖g4! ♖d8 5.♖g8! ♕d4

5...♖×g8 6.♕×f2

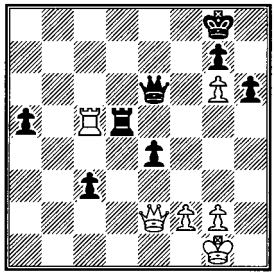
6.♕g4!

With a double attack!

6...♕d2 7.♕c8+! ♖×c8 8.♖×c8# 1-0

(37) Leonhardt – Fahrni
Carlsbad 1911 (D)

Under normal circumstances Black should have won here, but it is White on the move and there exists a back rank problem because of the g6-pawn.



42.♕×e4?

The correct idea but incorrect execution! White could have won with 42.♕a2! ♖d1+ (42...c2 43.♕×d5!) 43.♔h2 ♕×a2 44.♖c8+ ♖d8 45.♖×d8#.

42...♖d1+ 43.♔h2 ♕d6+

Now this check saves the day for Black.

44.f4 ♕f8 45.♖×c3

45.♕e6+ ♔h8 46.♖c8 ♖d8.

45...♖d8 46.♖c6 ♖a8 47.f5 ♕b8+?

Black's follows a wrong idea. He should try to defend with 47...♖d8.

48.g3 ♕a7?! 49.♖c7! 1-0

Black resigned as he cannot avoid mate after 49...♕f2+ (49...♕b8 50.♖×g7+ ♔×g7 51.♕e7+ ♔g8 52.♕f7+ ♔h8 53.♕h7#) 50.♔h3 ♕f1+ 51.♔h4.

"Simple" tactics are always on the menu:

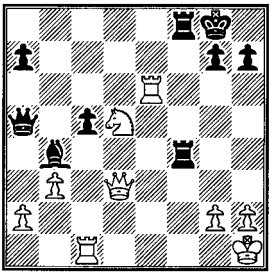
(38) Vogt – Alexander
Berlin 1962 (D)

Can White's queen be decoyed away from the defense of the f1-square?

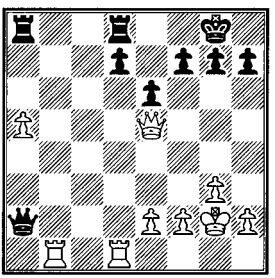
1...c4! 2.b×c4 ♕a3!!

A double attack!

3.♕d1 ♕×c1! 0-1



(39) Crouch – Speelman
Hastings 1992 (D)



25...♖×a5?

Black had to be satisfied with a draw after 25...♕×a5 26.♕×a5 ♖×a5 27.♖×d7=.

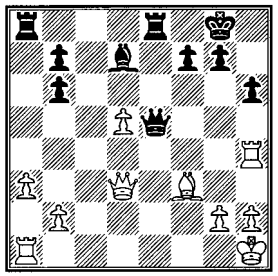
26.♖×d7?

But White did not notice the difference either! He could have won with 26.♖b8! ♖a8 and now the spectacular 27.♖a1!! ♕×a1 (27...♖d×b8 28.♖×a2+-) 28.♖×d8+ ♖×d8 29.♕×a1 winning.

26...♖f8 27.♖b2 ♖×e5 ½-½

But more complicated and extremely beautiful tactics can also be seen in connection with a back rank weakness. Here are two typical examples; the first is in particular quite well-known, as it was played by the famous Soviet player and world title challenger David Bronstein:

(40) Mikenas – Bronstein
Tallinn 1965 (D)



Black's threats are 24...♕×b2 and 24...♕e1+ 25.♕f1 ♕×h4.

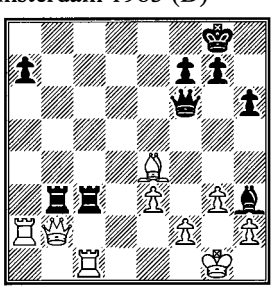
24.♖b4?

And White falls for the decoy. He should have gone in for 24.♕d4! ♕e1+ (24...♕d6=) 25.♖×e1 ♖×e1+ 26.♕g1 ♖×g1+ 27.♔×g1 ♔f8= or 24.♖d4! ♕e1+ (24...♖a4 25.♖×a4 ♕×b2? 26.♕d4+–) 25.♕f1 ♕e5 26.♕d3=. By the way, also bad was 24.♕d2 or 24.♕c3 because of 24...♖×a3!!.

24...♖×a3!! 0-1

The weak white back rank cannot be protected anymore efficiently, so White resigned after this impressive blow.

(41) Seirawan – Lobron
Amsterdam 1983 (D)



22.♖×a7?

On 22.♕a1 ♖×c1+ 23.♕×c1 ♕b6; 22.♕d2 ♖×c1+ 23.♕×c1 ♕b6 the game would end in a draw. But White thought that he could use some tricks with Black's weak back rank.

22...♕×f2+!!

A bold out of the blue – it is actually White's back rank that it is weak!

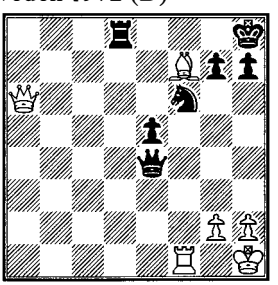
23.♔×f2

23.♕×f2 ♖×c1+ 24.♕e1 ♖×e1+ 25.♔f2 ♖f1+ –+

23...♖×b2+ 24.♔f3 ♖×c1 0-1

And White resigned in view of 25.♖a8+ ♖c8.

(42) Alden – Nilsson
Sweden 1972 (D)



White is a pawn down but a tempting continuation is in the air.

1.♖×f6?

This looks like a winner but in fact it is a losing move. White should have prepared himself for a long defense with something like 1.h3.

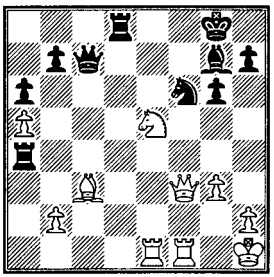
1...♕b7??

Black wins with the spectacular 1...♕c6!! (double deflection, coupled with a double attack) whereas the text move leads to the opposite result.

2.♕f1! 1-0

Somewhat more complicated cases can be of course connected to our theme but requires exact calculating abilities. Here are some instructive examples:

(43) Khalifman – Hjartarson
Reykjavik 1991 (D)



This is an extremely tactical position, where White has to find his way...

31.♘×g6?

But he didn't. He could have played 31.♘g4! ♘×g4 (31...♖×g4 32.♗×f6+–) 32.♕d5+! ♔h8 (32...♖×d5 33.♖e8+ ♗f8 34.♖f×f8#) 33.♖f7! ♘e5 34.♖×e5 ♕c6 35.♕×c6 b×c6 36.♖×g7! ♖d1+ 37.♔g2 ♔×g7 38.♖d5+ +–.

31...h×g6 32.♗×f6 ♖f8 33.♕d5+ ♕f7! 34.♕d1

34.♕×f7+ ♖×f7 35.♗×g7 ♖×f1+ 36.♖×f1 ♔×g7=.

34...♖a1!

An excellent counterstroke.

35.♕×a1 ♕d5+ 36.♔g1 ♗×f6

In such a position, the exchange advantage is worth little, in view of the open situation of the white king and the queen's unfortunate position.

37.h4 ♕d4+!

37...♗d4+? 38.♔h2 ♗f2 39.♕d1 +–

38.♔g2 ♕d2+ 39.♔h3 ♕d7+ 40.♔g2 ♕d2+ 41.♔h3

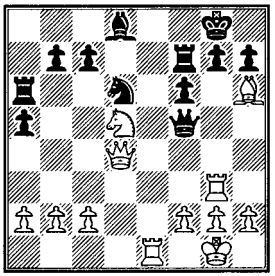
An equal endgame can arise after 41.♖f2 ♕×f2+! 42.♔×f2 ♗×b2+=.

41...♕d7+ 42.♔h2

White cannot escape the perpetual check: 42.g4 ♕d3+.

42...♕d2+ 43.♔h3 ½-½

(44) Korchmar – Polyak



19.♘b4!

The start of a decisive combination.

19...a×b4 20.♕×d6! ♕d7 21.♕d5!!

The key move in White's attack, creating the threat of 22.Rxg7+.

21...♔f8

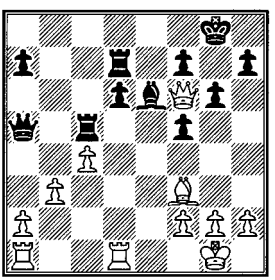
21...g6 fails to 22.♖ge3!.

22.♖×g7!

And mate follows.

22...♕×d5 23.♖g8+! ♔×g8 24.♖e8+ ♖f8 25.♖×f8# 1-0

(45) Bukic – Romanishin
Moscow 1977 (D)

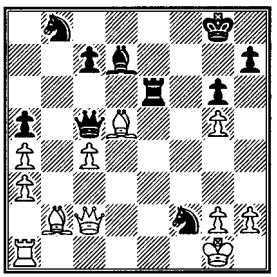


Black's uncoordinated pieces and his weak back rank allow the following neat combination:

22.b4! ♕×b4 23.♖db1 ♕×c4 24.♗e2 1-0

Black cannot defend anymore on the c-file (24...♕c3 [24...♕c2 25.♗d3] 25.♖b8+ ♖c8 26.♕×c3), so he resigned.

(46) Ballona – Aristazabal
Colombia 1993 (D)



Black executed a nice combination here:

1...♘d1+

But probably simpler was 1...♘g4+! 2.♔h1 ♕d6 3.♗×e6+ (3.g3 ♗c6) 3...♗×e6 4.g3 ♕c6+ 5.♕g2 ♘f2+ 6.♔g1 ♘h3+ 7.♔h1 ♕c5 -+.

2.♔h1 ♕×d5! 3.♖×d1!

3.c×d5?? ♖e1# was out of the question.

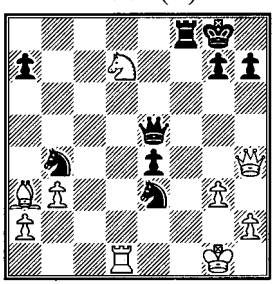
3...♗×a4!!

Black had to have foreseen this shot, as otherwise he would even lose: 3...♕e4? 4.♕c3+– or 3...♕d6 4.c5 ♕d5 5.h3+–.

4.♕×a4 ♕d2! 0-1

White resigned, since he remains a piece down, in view of the threatened 5...♖e1+: 5.h3 ♕×b2 6.♕×a5 ♖d6! 7.♕e1 (7.♖×d6 ♕c1+ 8.♔h2 ♕f4+ 9.♔h1 ♕×d6) 7...♖×d1 8.♕×d1 ♔g7 ∓.

(47) Bradford – Byrne
Greenville 1980 (D)



Black's pieces are hanging but White's back rank is weak...

30...♕d4?

But not like that! Black could have won by 30...♕d6! as it's important that the queen protects the rook from d6. Another strong continuation was 30...♕f5! 31.♘×f8 ♘×d1.

31.♕×h7+!

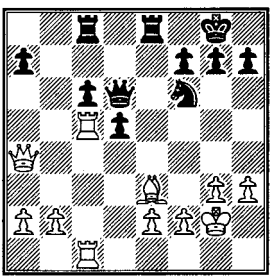
White's other option was to resign, so in a way Black forced White to win!

31...♔×h7 32.♘×f8+

The point – the rook that could deliver the mate on f1 is captured with check.

32...♔g8 33.♖×d4 ♘bc2 34.♖×e4 1-0

(48) Grivas – Halkias
Thessaloniki 1998 (D)



Black is in trouble because of his weak queenside pawn structure but Black can defend with 20...♖e6. Instead he saw a "combination."

20...♖×e3? 21.♖×c6 ♖×c6 22.♖×c6 ♕b8 23.f×e3 ♘e4

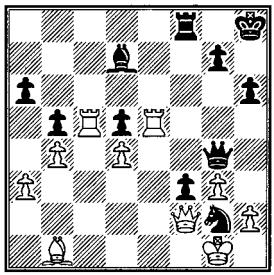
It seems that White is in trouble...

24.♖c7!

But not so! Black's weak back rank decides.

24...h6 25.♕d7 ♕×b2 26.♕×f7+ ♔h8 27.♕f8+ ♔h7 28.♕f5+ 1-0

(49) Wolf – Spielmann
Mährisch Ostrau 1923 (D)

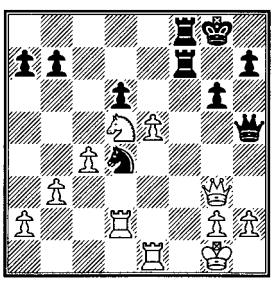


Here, several enemy pieces are decoyed: first, the queen – from the protection of the f3-pawn; then, the rook – from the eighth rank; and finally, the bishop – from the e8-square.

36.h3! ♕×h3 37.♕×f3! 1-0

Black resigned in view of 37...♖×f3 38.♖c8+! ♗×c8 39.♖e8+ ♖f8 40.♖×f8#.

(50) Panno – Bravo
Fortaleza 1975 (D)



28...♕e2!!

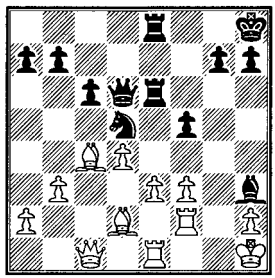
White missed this shot! A bad mistake would be 28...♘e2+? 29.♖d×e2 ♕×e2 30.♘f6+ ♖×f6 31.e×f6 ♕d2 32.♕e3±.

29.♖dd1 ♕×d1! 0-1

White resigned in view of 30.♖×d1 (30.♘f6+ ♖×f6 31.e×f6 ♘e2+) 30...♘e2+.

These types of back-rank tactics are not usually this "brutal." By this I mean that they arise as strategic ideas, trying to improve one's position, are implemented. The examples that follow are connected with strategic ideas, although they are still "brutal" from the perspective of the final result.

(51) Krause – Capelan
Solingen 1961

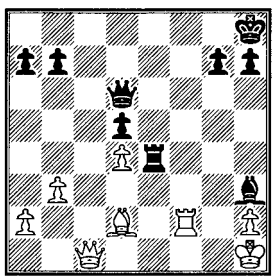


White should try to activate his central pawns, but it seems that Black keeps e4-square in bay.

1.e4! f×e4 2.f×e4 ♖×e4?

2...b5?! also leaves White with the better chances after 3.♗×d5 c×d5 4.♕c3 ♗g4 5.e5 but Black had to go for 2...♖f8! 3.e5 ♕d8∞.

3.♖×e4 ♖×e4 4.♗×d5! c×d5 (D)



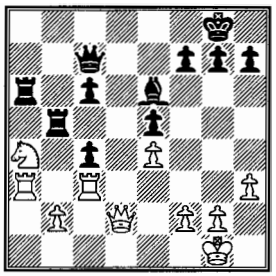
5.♕c7!!

This was the blow (analogous to the one Capablanca delivered in our second example) that Black overlooked.

5...♗g2+ 6.♔g1 1-0

In this case White found an improvement based on the eighth-rank weakness. I would call it a free and successful trap, a dream of every decent chessplayer!

(52) Ganchev – Pipkov
Albania 1966 (D)



Another case of a successful trap:

1.♘c5! ♖×a3 2.♖×a3 ♖×c5?

And Black falls for the decoy. He had to be satisfied with 2...h6 3.♘×e6 f×e6 4.♖a4±.

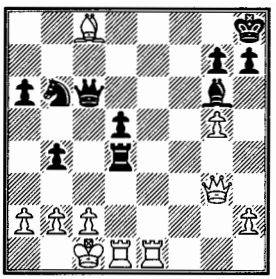
3.♖a8+ ♗c8 4.♖a7! ♕b6

Or 4...♗b7 5.♖×b7 ♕c8 6.♕d7 (6.♖d7? ♖d5) 6...♕f8 7.♖c7+−. Now Black was expecting a repetition with 5.♖a8.

5.♕d7!! 1-0

But he probably missed this decisive shot!

(53) Khalifman – Ehlvest
Lvov 1985 (D)



Here White found the correct way to benefit from Black's weak eighth rank.

30.♗f5!

Decoying the bishop away from the e8-square.

30...♗×f5 31.♕c7!!

A standard deflection of the queen.

31...♖×d1+ 32.♔×d1 ♗×c2+ 33.♔c1

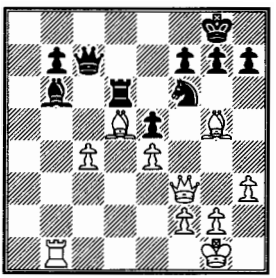
33.♔d2 ♘c4+ 34.♔c1 was good as well.

33...♗a4+ 34.♕×c6 ♗×c6 35.♖e6

The end of the combination – White remains an exchange up.

35...♗b5 36.♖×b6 ♔g8 37.♖b7 d4 38.♔d2 ♔f8 39.h4 d3 40.b3 h6 41.g×h6 g×h6 42.♖h7 1-0

(54) Lilienthal – Aronin
Moscow 1948 (D)



25.c5!

Thanks to this pawn sacrifice, the white rook gets access to the seventh or eighth rank.

25...♕×c5?!

Black could have put up more resistance by sacrificing the queen: 25...♗×c5 26.♖×b7 ♘×d5 27.♖×c7 ♘×c7+−.

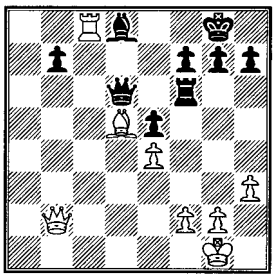
26.♖c1 ♕a5 27.♗×f6 ♖×f6

After 27...g×f6 White wins as follows: 28.♖c8+ ♖d8 (28...♗d8 29.♕h5) 29.♕h5! ♕×d5 30.e×d5 ♖×c8 31.♕g4+ +−.

28.♖c8+! ♗d8 29.♕c3?!

Missing the strong 29.♕d1! which wins at least a piece!

29...♕b6 30.♕b2! ♕d6 (D)



30...♕a5 31.♕d2!

31.f4?!

More accurate is 31.♕×b7! ♔f8 (31...♕f8 32.f4!) 32.♖b8 ♔e8 (32...g6 33.♕c8 ♔e8 34.♗c4+−) 33.♗b3!+−, as the unbreakable pin on the eighth rank must decide the game.

31...e×f4?!

If 31...♖×f4? then 32.♕×e5+− and the triple attack decides the game at once! But Black could put up stiff resistance with 31...♕d7! 32.♖b8 b5± which casts doubt on White's 31st move.

32.e5 ♕d7 33.♕×b7!

Now White finally wins.

33...♕e8 34.♕b8

34.♖×d8 was good as well, but not 34.e×f6? ♕e1+=.

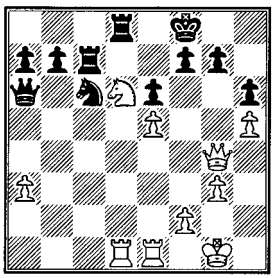
34...♖d6 35.♕×d6

35.e×d6? ♕e1+=.

35...♗b6+ 36.♕×b6 ♕×c8 37.e6 g5 38.e7 ♔g7 39.♗c6 1-0

When in a difficult position, it is a good to search for tactics which can turn the tables. Of course, our theme is still valid and can be used in different, effective ways. Just have a look at the following example and of course at the trap in the second one!

(55) Short – Bareev
Tilburg 1991 (D)



Black has won a pawn and has good chances to win the game also.

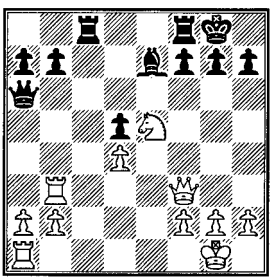
27...♘×e5?

But not like this! He should have gone in for 27...♖cd7! 28.f4 ♕×a3−+.

28.♘f5! 1-0

Black resigned as he has no defense: 28...♖×d1 (28...e×f5 29.♖×d8+ ♔e7 30.♕×g7 ♔×d8 31.♕×e5+−) 29.♕×g7+ ♔e8 30.♕g8+ ♔d7 31.♖×d1+ ♔c6 32.♖d6++−.

(56) Fernandez – Marino
Zamora 1996 (D)



Black thought that White's back rank was weak and that he had found a way to exploit it.

19...♕×a2?

Falling to the trap! Instead he should have played 19...♗d6! 20.♕×d5 and only now 20...♕×a2! 21.♖d1 ♖cd8=.

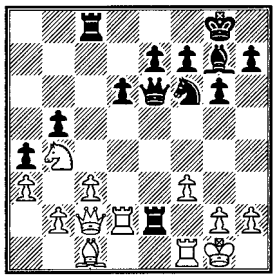
20.♕d1! 1-0

And the black queen is boxed in!

We will conclude this survey with

an extremely beautiful example, where resolution takes place on the file and not on the rank, but it is still connected with the back rank problem:

(57) Schwager – Ackerman
Riga 1978 (D)



1...♕e3+ 2.♔h1 ♕f2 3.♖g1

White seems to be fine, as there seem to be nothing more for Black than exchanges on d2. But surely this was not the reason for Black's invasion...

3...♘h5!! 4.♖×e2 ♘g3+! 5.h×g3 ♖c5! 0-1

White resigned, as mate is forced – this time, not on the rank, but on the file.

Conclusion

Keep an eye on your back rank and try to open a *luft* for your king; You never know what can happen. On the other hand also keep an eye on your opponent's back rank; you may be able to take advantage of it tactically or positionally.

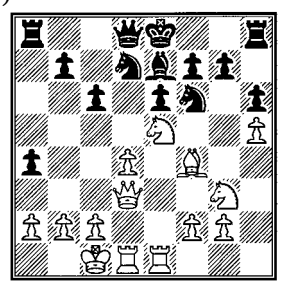
Dancing Knights

Concept

There are some exceptional but quite dangerous cases when a pair of knights or even one knight completely ignores the opponent pawns and are placed on squares were they can be captured. But, because of tactical reasons the opponent cannot really capture them; in these cases we have the phenomenon of the "dancing knights." With this term I mean that the knights penetrate to important squares in the opponent's camp and create lethal, or at least dangerous threats.

(58) Beliavsky – Larsen
Tilburg 1981
Caro-Kann Defense [B19]

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 d×e4 4.♘×e4 ♗f5 5.♘g3 ♗g6 6.h4 h6 7.♘f3 ♘d7 8.h5 ♗h7 9.♗d3 ♗×d3 10.♕×d3 ♘gf6 11.♗f4 e6 12.0-0-0 ♗e7 13.♘e5 a5 14.♖he1 a4 (D)



After this game nobody was willing to try the text move again, but instead played 14...0-0.

15.♘g6!

Here comes the first dance!

15...♘d5

Black cannot really accept the sacrifice, as after 15...f×g6 16.♕×g6+ ♔f8 17.♖×e6 ♕e8 18.♘f5 ♘×h5 19.♕×e8+ ♖×e8 20.♖×e7 ♖×e7 21.♗d6 he will be just a clear pawn down without any compensation.

16.♘f5! (D)

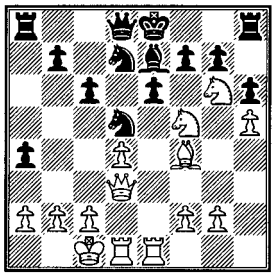
And here comes the second!

16...♗f8

16...f×g6 17.♘×g7+ ♔f7 18.♕×g6+ ♔f8 19.♘×e6# or 16...e×f5 17.♘×e7 ♘×e7 18.♗d6 ♘e5 19.d×e5 was curtains anyway.

17.♗d6!

A mating net around the black king



is being woven.

17...♖g8 18.c4 ♘b4

18...♘e5 19.d×e5 f×g6 20.c×d5 g×f5 21.d×e6 was also simply lost.

19.♕h3 f×g6 20.♖×e6+ ♔f7 21.h×g6+!

The final assault!

21...♔×e6 22.♖e1+ ♘e5

If 22...♔f6, then 23.♘h4! and White mates: 23...♖a5 24.♖e6+ ♔g5 25.♘f3#.

23.♗×e5 1-0

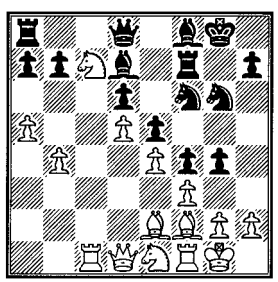
And Black called it a day in view of 23...♘d3+ 24.♕×d3 ♔d7 25.♘×h6!.

(59) Piket – Kasparov

Tilburg 1989

King's Indian Defense [E99]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.♘c3 0-0 5.e4 d6 6.♗e2 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.♘e1 ♘d7 10.♗e3 f5 11.f3 f4 12.♗f2 g5 13.b4 ♘f6 14.c5 ♘g6 15.c×d6 c×d6 16.♖c1 ♖f7 17.a4 ♗f8 18.a5 ♗d7 19.♘b5 g4 20.♘c7 (D)



In this complicated position every tempo counts.

20...g3! 21.♘×a8?!

The first knight (pseudo) "dances" on the a8-square, but White might have considered 21.h×g3 f×g3 22.♗×g3 ♗h6! 23.♘×a8 ♘h5 24.♗f2 ♘gf4 25.♘d3! (25.♖c7? ♗a4! 26.♕×a4 ♘×e2+ 27.♔h2 ♗f4+ 28.♔h3 ♘hg3 29.♖×f7 ♔×f7 30.♘d3 ♕c8+ 31.♔h4 ♘×f1 32.g4 ♘d2 33.♘e1 h5!-+) 25...♖g7 (25...♘×g2 26.♔×g2 ♖g7+ 27.♔h2 ♘g3! 28.♗×g3 ♕g5 29.♖g1 ♕h5+ 30.♔g2 ♗e3 31.♖h1 ♖×g3+ 32.♔×g3 ♕g5+ 33.♔h2 ♕h4+ 34.♔g2 ♕g5+ 35.♔h2 ♕h4+=) 26.♘×f4 ♗×f4 27.g4! (27.♖c7? ♘g3! 28.♖×d7 ♕h4 29.♖×g7+ ♔×g7 30.♗×a7 ♘×e2+ 31.♕×e2 ♗h2+-+) 27...♗×c1 28.♕×c1 ♘f4 29.♕e3 h5!∞.

21...♘h5!

21...g×f2+ 22.♖×f2 ♕×a8∞ was a fair alternative, but the text is stronger.

22.♔h1

It seems that after 22.♗×a7 ♕h4 23.h3 ♗×h3 24.g×h3 ♕×h3 25.♖f2 g×f2+ 26.♔×f2 Black has no more than perpetual check. But this is not true, as after 26...♘h4 27.♗f1 ♕h2+ 28.♗g2 ♖g7∓ he is on top.

22...g×f2 23.♖×f2 ♘g3+!

The second "dance!"

24.♔g1

24.h×g3? leads to mate: 24...f×g3 25.♔g1 ♕h4 26.♗c4 ♘f4.

24...♕×a8

Black does not really care about the a8-knight; he only wants to use the g1-a7 diagonal!

25.♗c4

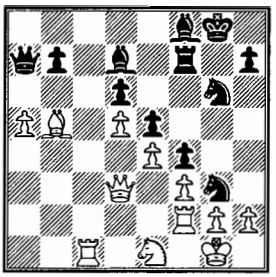
25.h×g3 f×g3 26.♖f1 ♘f4! (26...♕d8? 27.f4!∓) 27.♘d3 ♕d8! and it's all over.

25...a6! 26.♕d3?!

26.♘d3 was White's only chance to survive: 26...♕a7 27.♘c5 d×c5 (27...♗b5 28.♗×b5 a×b5 29.h×g3 f×g3 30.♖fc2 d×c5 31.b×c5 ♗h6∓) 28.d6

c×b4 29.♕d5 ♘h8 30.♕×e5 ♗g7∓. By the way, 26.h×g3 was still not satisfactory: 26...f×g3 27.♖fc2 ♕a7+ 28.♔f1 ♖f4! 29.♘d3 ♖h4 30.♔e2 ♖×e4+ 31.f×e4 ♗g4+∓.

26...♕a7 27.b5 a×b5 28.♗×b5 (D)



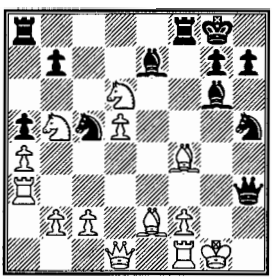
28...♘h1! 0-1

The third "dance" and a mirror move of White's 21st! White resigned.

When on the attack the "dancing knights" can be very dangerous pieces:

(60) Loginov – Gelfand
Sverdlovsk 1987
Irregular Defense [A41]

1.♘f3 d6 2.d4 ♗g4 3.h3 ♗h5 4.e4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 e6 6.d5 e5 7.♗e3 ♗e7 8.♗e2 ♗g6 9.♘d2 c6 10.0-0 0-0 11.a4 a5 12.♗f3 c×d5 13.e×d5 ♘e8 14.♖a3 f5 15.♘c4 ♘d7 16.♖b3 ♘ef6 17.g3 ♕c8 18.♗e2 f4 19.g×f4 e×f4 20.♗×f4 ♘c5 21.♖a3 ♕×h3 22.♘×d6 ♘h5 23.♘cb5 (D)



A very complicated position. White is a pawn up but his king is in danger.

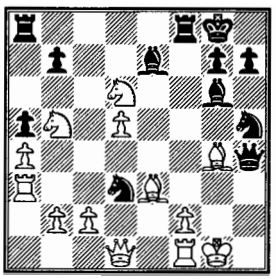
23...♘d3!

The knight stops the attack on the black queen and wins precious time.

24.♗g4

The alternative was 24.♗h2 ♘hf4 25.♗×f4 ♖×f4 26.♖×d3 ♕d7 (26...♕h4 27.♖g3 ♖d8 28.♗f3 ♗×d6 29.♘×d6 ♖×d6∞/=) 27.♖d4 ♗×d6∞/= while of course 24.♗×d3? is out of the question: 24...♘×f4 25.♗e4 ♕d7 26.♗×g6 h×g6 27.♘c4 ♗×a3-+.

24...♕h4 25.♗e3 (D)



25...♘g3!

White thought that d3- and g3-squares were fully protected by his pawns, although the black knights do not fully agree with him!

26.♗e6+

The immediate 26.f×g3 was also hopeless: 26...♕×g3+ 27.♔h1 ♖×f1+ 28.♕×f1 ♕×g4 29.♖×d3 ♗×d6 30.♘×d6 ♗×d3 31.♕×d3 ♕h3+ 32.♔g1 ♕g3+-+.

26...♔h8 27.f×g3

Forced. If 27.♔g2, then Black wins by 27...♘×f1 28.♕×f1 ♘×f2! 29.♗×f2 ♗e4+ 30.♘×e4 ♕×e4+ 31.♔g1 ♗c5 32.♗×c5 ♖×f1+ 33.♔×f1 ♕c4+-+.

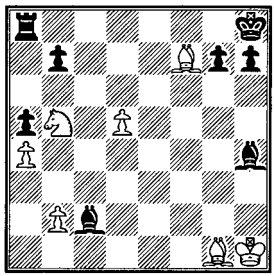
27...♕×g3+ 28.♔h1 ♗h5! 29.♖×d3

A bit better was 29.♕×d3 although after 29...♖×f1+ 30.♕×f1 ♗f3+ 31.♕×f3 ♕×f3+ 32.♔h2 ♕h5+ 33.♔g2 ♕g6+ 34.♔h3 ♖f8 White would also lose.

29...♗×d1 30.♗g1 ♕h4+ 31.♖h3 ♖×f1 32.♖×h4 ♗×h4 33.♘f7+ ♔g8 34.♘e5+ ♔h8

34...♔f8 35.♔g2 ♖×g1+ 36.♔×g1 ♗×c2−+.

35.♘f7+ ♖×f7 36.♗×f7 ♗×c2 (D)



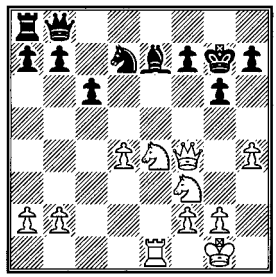
And Black won without too much problem, although the game did continue for a while:

37.♗e6 ♖d8 38.♗b6 ♗e4+ 39.♔h2 ♖×d5 40.♗×d5 ♗×d5 41.♗×a5 ♗c6 42.♘c3 ♗e1 43.♗c7 g5 44.♗e5+ ♔g8 45.b4 ♔f7 46.b5 ♗f3 47.a5 ♔e6 48.♗d4 h5 49.a6 b×a6 50.b×a6 h4 51.♔g1 g4 52.a7 ♗×c3 53.♗×c3 g3 0-1

Dutch grandmaster Jan Timman seemed to be an expert on this theme. Here are two masterpieces which demonstrate it. Although against Nigel Short he was not winning, he created many threats and induced his opponent (in a way) to a blunder. In the second game he was unstoppable and he just hammered his unlucky opponent!

(61) Timman – Short
Belgrade 1987
Queen's Gambit Declined [D36]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.c×d5 e×d5 6.♗g5 c6 7.♕c2 g6 8.e4 d×e4 9.♗×f6 ♗×f6 10.♕×e4+ ♔f8 11.♗c4 ♔g7 12.0-0 ♖e8 13.♕f4 ♗e6 14.♗×e6 ♖×e6 15.♖fe1 ♖×e1+ 16.♖×e1 ♘d7 17.♘e4 ♗e7 18.h4 ♕b8 (D)



White's activity is obvious and Black feels uncomfortable. But if he could exchange queens he would breath.

19.♘e5! f6!

Black tries to get control over the important e5- and g5-squares. The alternative, 19...♘×e5? 20.d×e5 ♕c8 21.h5 ♕e6 22.h6+ ♔g8 23.♘f6+ ♗×f6 24.♕×f6 ♕×f6 (24...♖e8? 25.♕g7#) 25.e×f6±, was hardly appealing.

20.♘g5!

The knights start their lethal dance! This wasn't what Black contemplated when played his last move!

20...♘f8

The most stubborn defense. Instead, 20...♘×e5? 21.♘e6+ ♔g8 (21...♔f7 22.d×e5 f5 23.♘c7!+−; 21...♔h8 22.d×e5 f×e5 23.♕f7 ♗f8 24.♖d1 ♕e8 25.♕f6+ ♔g8 26.♘c7+−) 22.d×e5 f×e5 23.♕c4! (23.♖×e5 ♕d6 [23...♗d6? 24.♘g5 ♕c7 25.♕c4+ ♔h8 26.♖e3+−] 24.♘g5 ♖f8 25.♕c4+ ♔h8 26.♕e2±) 23...♔h8 24.♖e3! ♕d6 25.♖d3 ♕b4 26.♕×b4 ♗×b4 27.♖d7 ♖e8 28.♖×b7 ♖×e6 29.♖×b4± or 20...f×g5? 21.♕f7+ ♔h6 22.♕×e7+− or, finally, 20...♗d6? 21.♘×d7! (21.♘e6+ ♔g8 22.♘×d7 ♗×f4 23.♘×b8 ♗×b8 24.♘c5±) 21...♗×f4 22.♖e7+ ♔h8 23.♖×h7+ ♔g8 24.♘×f6+ ♔f8 25.♘e6# were not appealing.

21.h5!

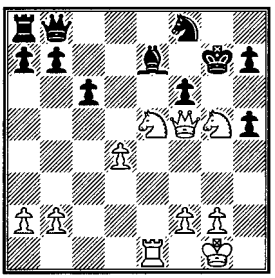
White continues the attack on the

black king.

21...g×h5

Again, the only move. Bad was 21...♗d6? 22.h6+ ♔×h6 23.♘e6+ ♔h5 24.♘g7# or 21...f×g5? 22.♕f7+ ♔h6 23.♕×e7 ♕e8 24.♘g4+ ♔×h5 25.♘f6+ ♔h6 26.g4!! (26.♘×e8+−) 26...♕×e7 27.♖×e7 ♖d8 28.♘g8# or, finally, 21...h6? 22.♕f3! ♗d6 (22...h×g5 23.♘×c6! b×c6 24.♖×e7+ ♔h6 25.♕×f6+−; 22...♗d8 23.♘×g6 h×g5 24.♘×f8 ♔×f8 25.♕e4+−) 23.♘g4! (23.♕b3 ♕c7!) 23...f×g5 24.♕f6+ ♔g8 25.h×g6+−. In all these variations the white knights perform a lethal dance!

22.♕f5 (D)



22.♖e3 h4 23.♖f3 ♕d6 24.♘e4 ♕×d4 25.♘×f6 (25.♘g4 ♔h8) 25...♕×f4 26.♘h5+ ♔g8 27.♖×f4 ♖d8 28.♖f7 ♖d1+ 29.♔h2 ♘g6 30.♖g7+ ♔f8 31.♖f7+ ♔e8 32.♘g7+ ♔d8 33.♘e6+ ♔e8=.

22...♕c8?

But this is a bad mistake. After 22...♕c7? 23.♘d7 ♕×d7 24.♕×d7 ♘×d7 25.♖×e7+ ♔g6 26.♘e6± White would be happy, but Black could maintain the balance with either 22...♕e8! 23.♘e4!? (23.♘c4? f×g5 24.♘d6 ♗×d6−+; 23.♘h3 ♗b4 24.♘f4 ♕e7 25.♘×h5+ ♔h8 26.♖e4 f×e5 27.♖×e5 ♕c7 28.a3 ♗d6 29.♕f6+ ♔g8 30.♖g5+ ♘g6 31.♕e6+ ♔h8 32.♕f6+=) 23...f×e5 (23...♕c8? 24.♘g3!) 24.♕×e5+ ♔g8 25.♘d6 ♗×d6 26.♕×e8 ♖×e8 27.♖×e8 ♗c7! 28.♖e7 ♗b6 29.♖×b7 ♗×d4= or either 22...♕d8! 23.♘ef7 ♕c7 (23...♕e8? 24.♘d6 ♕d8 25.♘gf7! ♕c7 26.♕f4+−) 24.♘e6+ ♘×e6 25.♕×e6 ♗b4 (25...♖f8 26.♘h6 ♔×h6 27.♕×e7 ♕×e7 28.♖×e7 ♖d8 29.♖×b7 ♖×d4 30.♖×a7 ♖d1+ 31.♔h2 ♖d2=) 26.♘h6! ♗×e1 27.♘f5+ ♔g6 28.♘e7+=.

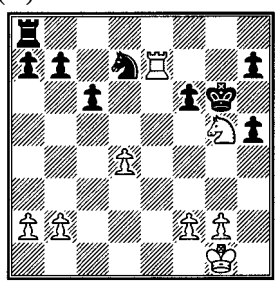
23.♘d7!

Now White can settle for a pleasant and advantageous endgame.

23...♕×d7

What else? If 23...♗d8, then 24.♘e6+ ♘×e6 25.♕×e6+−.

24.♕×d7 ♘×d7 25.♖×e7+ ♔g6 (D)



25...♔f8?! 26.♖×h7! ♖e8 27.♖f7+ ♔g8 28.♖×d7 f×g5 29.♖×b7+−

26.♘f3!

This is better than 26.♘e6?! ♘f8 27.♘×f8+ ♖×f8 28.♖×b7 ♖d8±.

26...♖d8 27.♔h2

Even better was 27.♘h4+ ♔h6 28.f4±.

27...♘f8

27...b6 28.♘h4+ ♔h6 (28...♔g5 29.♔g3 ♘f8 30.♖g7+ ♘g6 31.f4+ ♔h6 32.♘f5#) 29.f4 ♘f8 30.♖×a7±

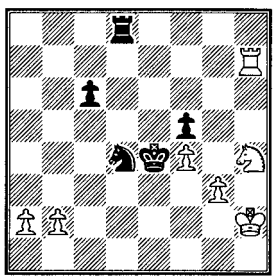
28.♖×b7

The endgame is of course better for White, but has nothing to do with our theme, so we will only examine it with some light comments.

28...♘e6

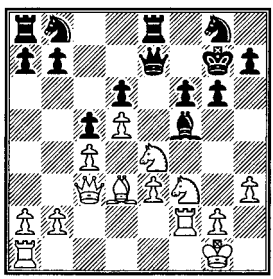
28...♖d7 29.♖×d7 ♘×d7 30.♘h4+ ♔f7 31.♔g3 ♔e6 32.♔f4 ♔d5 33.♔e3±

29.♖×a7 ♘×d4 30.♘h4+ ♔g5
30...♔h6 31.♖b7 ♖d5 32.a3±
31.g3
31.♔g3? ♘e2+ 32.♔f3 ♘d4+=
31...f5 32.f4+ ♔f6
32...♔h6 33.b4!+−
33.♖×h7 ♔e6
33...♖b8 34.b3 ♖a8 35.a4 ♖b8 (35...♘×b3 36.♖h6+ ♔f7 37.♖×c6 ♖×a4 38.♘×f5±) 36.♖h6+ ♔f7 37.♖×h5 ♔e6 38.♖h6+ ♔d5 39.♖f6 ♔e4 40.♖f7 ♖×b3 41.♖e7+ ♔d3 42.♖e5±
34.♖h6+ ♔d5 35.♖×h5 ♔e4 36.♖h7 (D)



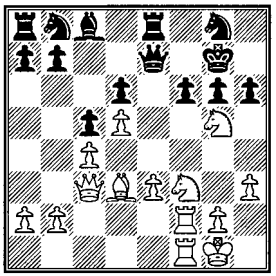
36...♔d3?!
After this inaccuracy Black probably cannot save the game any longer. Instead he had to opt for 36...♖a8 37.a3 ♖b8 38.b4 ♖a8 39.♖e7+ ♔d3 40.♖e5 ♖×a3 41.♔h3±, when of course he stands worse, but White is far from winning.
37.♖f7 ♖d5 38.b4 ♔c4 39.a3 ♔b3 40.♖a7 ♘c2 41.♖a5 ♖d2+
41...♘×a3 42.♖×d5 c×d5 43.♘×f5 ♔×b4 44.g4+−
42.♔h3 ♘×a3 43.♖a6 ♖c2 44.♘×f5 ♘b5
44...♔×b4 45.♘d4+−
45.♘e7 ♘d4 46.♖b6 ♖c3
46...♖c4 47.f5+−.
47.♔g4 ♔a4 48.♖b7 ♘c2
48...♘e2 49.♘f5 ♖d3 50.♖e7 ♘c3 51.♖e6+−
49.f5 ♘×b4 50.♖×b4+! ♔×b4 51.f6 ♖a3 52.f7 ♖a8 53.♘×c6+ ♔c5 54.♘e5 ♔d6 55.♘g6 1-0

(62) Timman – van Wijgerden
Rotterdam 1977
King's Indian Defense [E90]
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.h3 c5 7.d5 e6 8.♗d3 e×d5 9.e×d5 ♖e8+ 10.♗e3 ♗h6 11.0-0 ♗×e3 12.f×e3 ♔g7 13.♕d2 ♘g8 14.♘e4 ♕e7 15.♕c3+ f6 16.♖f2 ♗f5 (D)



Black is suffering, as White's pieces are active and in attacking positions. So, it is not strange that there is a good continuation waiting in the wings.
17.♘eg5!
17.♘fg5! ♕e5 18.♕×e5 ♖×e5 19.g4!+− was strong too.
17...♗c8
Black's options were limited: 17...♗×d3 18.♘e6+ ♔h8 19.♕×d3 ♘d7 20.♕c3±; 17...♕×e3?! 18.♖e1 ♕×d3 19.♖×e8 ♕×c3 20.b×c3 f×g5 21.♘×g5+−.
18.♖af1
The last white piece joins the attack.
18...h6 (D)

White is very active and now the matter is resolved with a combination.
19.♗×g6! ♔×g6
Maybe Black could try 19...h×g5 20.♗×e8 ♕×e8 21.♘×g5 ♕e5 although after 22.♘e4! ♘d7 23.♕×e5 d×e5



24.♖f3 ♔f7 25.g4 ♔g6 26.h4+−, he would just be lost.

20.♕d3+ ♔g7

20...f5 loses to 21.♘h4+! ♔g7 22.♖×f5!+−.

21.♘e5!

The white knights do not care about the black pawns controlling their entering squares; they just dance! Black has no defense anymore.

21...d×e5

21...h×g5 22.♕g6+ ♔h8 23.♘f7+ and 21...f5 22.♖×f5 ♗×f5 23.♕×f5+−.

22.♕h7+ ♔f8 23.♖×f6+! ♘×f6

23...♕×f6 24.♖×f6+ ♘×f6 25.♕f7#

24.♕h8# 1-0

Conclusion

This is an unusual and peculiar theme which is not met that often. But it does exist and training for it is an obligation of the ambitious chessplayer. The knight pair in the middlegame, when they are able to completely ignore the opponent's pawns (the false guards!) is a dangerous attacking weapon.

Doubled f-pawns

Concept

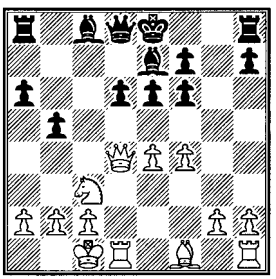
Central doubled pawns are the most common form of doubled pawns, as they not only occur most often but also have significant merits (control of central squares, semi-open file, mutual support between the pawns) while its negative aspects are minimal and are usually only encountered in the endgame, when these pawns may become vulnerable. Here we will examine some positions with doubled f-pawns (mirror c-pawns) and be alert for their pros and cons.

So, the advantages they offer are control of important squares and one additional semi-open file. Their main disadvantage is their vulnerability when they are attacked by the opponent; this vulnerability becomes obvious (as in all cases regarding pawn-structures) in the endgame.

We will start with some games of "Sicilian Defense" type of f-pawns; a theme that is not uncommon.

(63) Topalov – Kramnik
Monte Carlo 2000
Sicilian Defense [B66]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♕d2 a6 8.0-0-0 ♗e7 9.f4 ♘×d4 10.♕×d4 b5 11.♗×f6 g×f6 (D)



This is a typical Sicilian Defense set-up. Black has doubled f-pawns and the bishop pair, while White has safer king, more space and good center.

12.♗e2 ♕c7 13.f5

A direct attack. The e5-square is

not that important, as Black has no knight to place there.

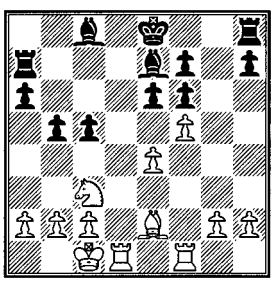
13...♕c5 14.♕×c5 d×c5

The queen exchange favored Black, as now his king is less unsafe.

15.♖hf1

The point of this new idea is to hold 15.f×e6 back, for example, 15..f×e6 16.♗h5+ ♔f8 17.e5 f5 18.g4 when after the strong 18...♖a7! Black can equalize: 19.g×f5 e×f5 20.♘d5 ♗g5+ 21.♔b1 ♗e6, as in Kotronias-Lupulescu, Kavala 2004.

15...♖a7 (D)



A natural continuation in this variation. If 15...b4, then 16.♘a4±.

16.a4!?

Now 16.f×e6 f×e6 17.♗h5+ ♔f8 18.e5 f5 19.g4 ♗g5+ 20.♔b1 ♔g7= leads to well-known positions.

16...b4 17.♘b1 ♖d7

17...♖g8 18.g3±.

18.♖×d7 ♔×d7 19.♘d2

19.♗h5 ♖f8 20.♘d2 ♗d6 21.g3 ♔e7 22.♘c4 ♗c7=

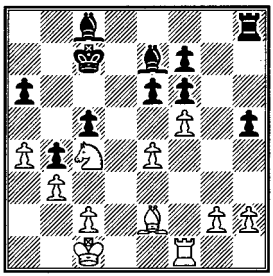
19...h5!

Seems unnecessary, but this move is quite good. After 19...♖d8 20.♗h5 White gains a small advantage: 20...♔e8 (20...e×f5 21.e×f5 ♔e8 22.♗e2 ♗d6 23.g3±) 21.f×e6 ♗×e6 22.♗e2 ♗c8 23.g3±.

20.♘c4 ♔c7

This is a safe place for the black king.

21.b3 (D)



21...e×f5

An interesting decision. Black decides to weaken his pawn structure further, but at the same time he opens the position for his bishop pair. Instead, 21...♗b7 22.♗f3 h4= was not bad either.

22.e×f5 ♗d6?!

But here better was 22...h4 23.♘e3 ♗d6 24.♘d5+ ♔b8 25.h3 (25.♘×f6 ♗×h2 26.♗c4 ♗g3 27.♘e4 ♗b7 28.♘×c5 ♗×g2 29.♘×a6+ ♔a8 30.♖g1 h3−+) 25...♗b7 26.♗f3 ♗e5=.

23.♘×d6 ♔×d6 24.♖f4

Now White can go for the full point without risk, as Black's weak pawn structure is no longer compensated by the bishop pair. 24.♗c4!? was a reasonable alternative: 24...♔e5 25.g3 (25.♗×f7 ♗×f5 26.♖e1+ ♗e4=) 25...♗×f5 (25...a5 26.♖d1 ♗b7 27.♖d7±) 26.♗×a6±.

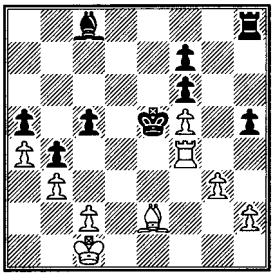
24...a5

24...h4 doesn't help: 25.♔d2 ♗b7 26.♔e3± (26.c3 b×c3+ 27.♔×c3 h3 [27...♗×g2 28.♗×a6 ♔e5 29.♖f2 ♗e4 30.♖e2 ♔×f5 31.♔c4 ♖b8 32.♗b5 ♔e5 33.♔×c5±] 28.g3±) and if 24...♔e5?! then 25.♖c4!±.

25.g3 ♔e5 (D)

26.♖h4?

The wrong idea, squandering the advantage. White had to opt for 26.♗d3! ♖g8 (26...h4? 27.♖e4+! ♔d6 28.♖×h4 ♖×h4 29.g×h4 ♔e7 [29...♔e5



30.h5 ♗×f5 31.h6+–] 30.♔d2 ♔f8 31.♔e3 ♔g7 32.♔f4 ♔h6 33.♗c4 ♔h5 34.♔e4 ♔×h4 35.♔d5 ♗×f5 36.♔×c5 ♗×c2 37.♔b6+–) 27.♖e4+ ♔d6 28.♖h4 (28.♖e2 h4! 29.g×h4 ♖h8=) 28...♖g5 29.♗e2 ♗×f5 30.♖×h5 ♗g6 31.♖h8±. Also bad was 26.♖c4? ♗a6! 27.♖×c5+ ♔d4∓.

26...♗×f5 27.♖×h5

The other option was 27.♗×h5 ♗g6 28.♗e2 ♖×h4 29.g×h4 ♗e4 30.h5 f5 31.♔d2 (31.h6?! ♔f6! [31...f4?! 32.♔d2 (32.♗d3? ♗×d3 33.c×d3 ♔f6 34.♔d2 ♔g6 35.♔e2 ♔×h6 36.♔f3 ♔g5–+) 32...♔f6 33.♗d3] 32.♔d2 ♔g6 33.♗h5+ ♔×h6 34.♗×f7 ♔g5∓) 31...♔f6 32.♗c4 ♔g7 33.c3 ♗f3 34.c×b4 c×b4 35.♔e3=.

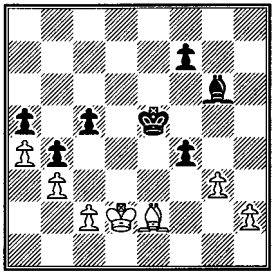
27...♖×h5 28.♗×h5 ♗g6 29.♗e2

In this endgame both opponents should be quite careful not to slip! For example, White could even lose after the naive 29.♗×g6? f×g6 30.♔d2 because of Black's better king: 30...♔d4 31.h4 f5 32.♔e2 ♔c3 33.♔d1 c4 34.b×c4 ♔×c4 35.♔d2 ♔d4–+. Doubled f-pawns can be quite strong!

29...f5

Possible was 29...♗e4 30.♔d2 f5 31.♔e3! (31.h4 f4 32.g×f4+ ♔×f4 33.h5 ♔g5 34.c3 f5 35.c×b4 c×b4 36.♗d1 f4∓) 31...♗×c2 32.♗c4 ♔f6 33.♔f4∞/=.

30.♔d2 f4! (D)



31.g4

Not bad, but probably more accurate was the natural (and quick enough) 31.g×f4+ ♔×f4 32.h4 ♗e4 33.c3 f5 34.♗d1 ♔e5 35.c×b4 c×b4 36.h5=.

31...♔e4

After 31...f5!? 32.♗d3! (32.g5? f3 33.♗×f3 ♔f4 34.♗d5 ♔×g5 35.c3 ♔f4∓) 32...♔f6 33.g×f5 ♗×f5 34.♗×f5 ♔×f5 the endgame is drawn: 35.♔e2 (35.♔d3 ♔g5 36.♔e2 ♔g4 37.♔f2 ♔h3 38.♔f3 [38.♔g1 ♔h4 39.♔g2 ♔g4=] 38...♔×h2 39.♔×f4 ♔g2 40.♔e3 ♔f1 41.♔d2 ♔f2 42.c3 ♔f1 43.c×b4 c×b4 44.♔d1= [44.♔d3? ♔e1 45.♔c4 ♔d2 46.♔b5 ♔c3 47.♔×a5 ♔×b3 48.♔b5 ♔c3 49.a5 b3 50.a6 b2 51.a7 b1♕+–+]) 35...♔g4 36.♔f2 ♔h3 37.♔f3 ♔×h2 38.♔×f4 ♔g2 39.♔e4 ♔f2 40.c4 ♔e2 41.♔d5 ♔d3 42.♔×c5 ♔c3 43.♔b5 ♔×b3 44.c5 ♔a3 45.c6 b3 46.c7 b2 47.c8♕ b1♕+=.

32.h4 f3 33.♗d3+ ♔f4 34.♗×g6 f×g6 35.h5 ♔g3

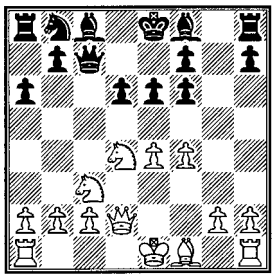
Black could also split the point by the simple 35...g×h5 36.g×h5 ♔g3 37.h6 f2 38.h7 f1♕ 39.h8♕=.

36.h×g6 f2 37.g7 f1♕ 38.g8♕ ♕f4+ 39.♔e2 ½-½

(64) Groszpeter – Nisipeanu
Krynica 1998
Sicilian Defense [B96]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 e6

7.f4 ♕c7 8.♗×f6 g×f6 9.♕d2 (D)



Here again we have the usual "Sicilian case" where each sides has pros and cons, as previously mentioned.

9...h5!?

This move aims to fight against White's ♗e2-h5 and f5 idea. Other moves are supposed to lead to White's advantage. One of the most usual alternative is 9...b5 10.0-0-0 ♗b7 11.♗d3 h5 12.♖he1 ♘d7 13.♔b1 ♕b6 14.♘b3 0-0-0 15.a4 b4 16.♘a2 a5 17.c3! ♘c5 18.c×b4 ± Jansa-Ermenkov, Smederevska Palanka 1979.

10.0-0-0

Possible is 10.♗e2 b5 11.0-0-0 ♘d7 12.a3 ♘b6 13.♖he1 ♗b7 14.♔b1 Castellanos-Cabrera, La Paz 2002.

10...b5

This is the modern way to treat the variation; 10...♘c6 is supposed to lead to White's advantage.

11.♔b1 ♘d7 12.f5

White has to fight for the initiative, even if he hands Black the e5-square. Otherwise Black will consolidate and his position will become preferable.

12...b4

The main alternative is 12...♘e5!? 13.♕f2 (13.♘ce2?! ♘c4 14.♕e1 e5 15.♘f3 ♘e3 16.♖d2 [16.♘c3? ♘×d1 17.♘d5 ♘c3+ 18.b×c3 ♕d8 19.c4 b×c4 20.♗×c4 ♖b8+ 21.♔a1 ♗b7∓] 16...♗h6 is good for Black) 13...♘g4 14.♕g3± or 12...♘c5 13.♗d3±.

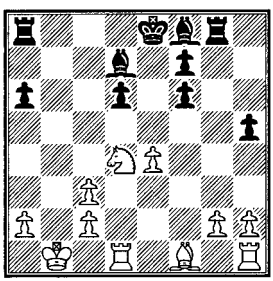
13.f×e6

White is obliged to go in for the coming exchanges, as 13.♘ce2 e5 14.♘b3 a5 (14...♗b7!? 15.♕×b4 ♖c8∞/= [15...d5? 16.♕a5]) looks fine for Black, as White cannot benefit from the weak d5-square.

13...b×c3 14.e×d7+ ♗×d7 15.♕×c3

15.b×c3 gives Black too much play after 15...♖b8+ 16.♔a1 ♗h6 17.♕d3 ♗f4 and ...♗e5. This bishop-maneuver is quite thematic for such pawn structures.

15...♕×c3 16.b×c3 ♖g8 (D)



Black has sacrificed a pawn, which is unimportant (doubled on the c-file) but his main problem is his weak pawn structure – all his pawns are isolated and doubled!

17.g3 ♖g5!

The activation of the rook is a quite good idea. 17...d5? would be premature: 18.e×d5 ♗a3 19.♗c4 ♖b8+ 20.♗b3 a5 21.♘c6! +−.

18.♗c4 ♖c5

The fifth rank is perfect for the black rook. Actually this maneuver is typical in this structure.

19.♗b3 a5!

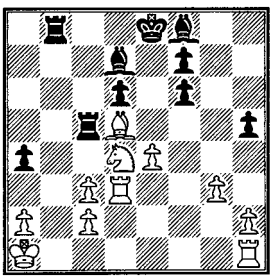
Playing for the initiative. 19...♖×c3 is not that good because 20.♘f5 (20.♖hf1 ♗g4 21.♖d3 ♖×d3 22.c×d3 ♗e7 23.♖f2±) 20...♗×f5 (20...♖c6 21.♖d3±) 21.e×f5 ♖c5±.

20.♖d3

20.♘f5 a4 21.♗d5 ♖b8+ 22.♔a1

♖×c3 or 20.a4 ♖b8 21.♔a2 ♖×c3 22.♘f5 ♗e6 are fine continuations for Black.

20...a4 21.♗d5 ♖b8+ 22.♔a1 (D)



22...f5!

It is time to get rid of the weak doubled f-pawns.

23.♖b1

White has little choice. If 23.♖e1, then 23...♗g7! 24.c4 (24.e×f5+ ♔f8 25.f6 ♗×f6 26.♖f3 ♔g7 27.♖ef1 ♗h3! 28.♖×f6 ♗×f1 29.♖×f7+ ♔g6∓) 24...♔f8 25.c3 f×e4 26.♖×e4 ♗×d4 (26...♗e5?! 27.♖h4 ♗g4 28.h3±) 27.♖d×d4 (27.c×d4 ♖×d5 28.c×d5 ♗f5=) 27...♗f5 28.♖e1 ♔g7= or 23.♘×f5 ♗×f5 24.e×f5 ♗g7 25.♖e1+ ♔f8 26.♖ee3 ♖cb5 27.♖d1 ♖c5=.

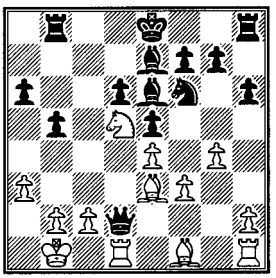
23...♖×b1+ 24.♔×b1 f×e4 ½-½

And the opponents agreed to a draw, as after 25.♗×e4 h4 the chances are equal.

So, Black in these games did not really suffer as a result of the doubled f-pawns. But the following game is impressive. It was not initially obvious why Black allowed the doubling of his f-pawns, but when Black's profound concept did become clear, it was too late for White to react...

(65) Ivanchuk – Anand
Linares 1992
Sicilian Defense [B66]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.♗g5 e6 7.♕d2 a6 8.0-0-0 h6 9.♗e3 ♘×d4 10.♗×d4 b5 11.f3 ♕a5 12.a3 e5 13.♗e3 ♗e6 14.♔b1 ♗e7 15.g4 ♖b8 16.♘d5 ♕×d2 (D)



17.♘×f6+?!

It takes considerable positional flair to appreciate just how vulnerable White's kingside is here. 17.♖×d2!= was a must.

17...g×f6!

Setting up the attack on White's g- and h-pawns. The doubled pawn plays a key role in defending the g5-square. Of course 17...♗×f6?! 18.♖×d2 ♔e7 19.h4± was out of the question.

18.♖×d2 h5! 19.♖g1

Black would feel more than happy after 19.♗e2?! h×g4 20.f×g4 ♖h3∓.

19...h×g4 20.f×g4 ♗c4!

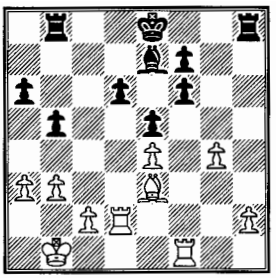
Just a great positional move, and as beautiful as chess moves often are, on the basis of its surprising disrespect for established wisdom. Or, more accurately, it is a very precise weighing of different factors. The key point is that it is Black who stands to gain more from a light-square contest – albeit a very specific, "localized" light-square contest. Black's bad bishop will protect his pawns while he exchanges down with connected h- and g-passers in mind. 20...♔d7? 21.h3−+ was again a naive continuation.

21.b3

Here White had to make a difficult

decision. His main alternative was 21.♗×c4 b×c4 22.♖d5 ♖b5!∓ (22...♖×h2 23.♖a5∞) 23.♖×b5 a×b5 24.♖g2 ♖h3, when Black would be also be on the top; it would be just too nice for him.

21...♗×f1 22.♖×f1 (D)



22...♖h3!

And here we have the key – the h3-square gives Black the bulk of the play, while his "bad bishop" performs a very crucial defensive duty with great ease. The light squares which are incontestably White's – d5 and f5 – may provide some aesthetic compensation, but little in terms of tangible benefit. One must note that here White has three pawn islands compared to Black's two, but most important is the fact that White's pawns are under attack.

23.♖e2

After 23.♗g1 ♔d7 24.♖d3 Black gains a clear advantage: 24...♖h4! (24...♖×d3 25.c×d3 ♖h8 26.♖f3 d5∞) 25.♖g3 (25.h3?! ♖bh8 26.♖ff3 f5! 27.♖×f5 ♖×h3∞) 25...♖g8 26.h3 ♖gh8 27.♖ff3 f5! 28.e×f5 (28.♖×f5 ♖×h3 29.♖×h3 ♖×h3 30.♗f2 [30.♖×f7? ♖h1 31.♖f1 ♗g5 32.♖e1 ♗d2−+] 30...♔e6∓ as the white e4- and g4-pawns are rather weak) 28...e4 29.♖e3 (29.♖c3? ♗f6) 29...d5∓.

23...♔d7 24.g5 ♔e6 25.g×f6 ♗×f6 26.♗d2 ♗e7

Of course 26...♗h4 27.♗b4 leads nowhere, but it seems that Black could also play 26...♖g8 27.♖ef2 ♗e7 28.♖×f7 ♖g4∓.

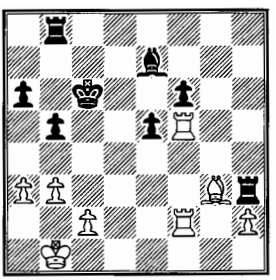
27.♗e1 f6 28.♗g3 d5 29.e×d5+ ♔×d5 30.♖f5!

Forcing Black to lose some time.

30...♔c6

The only move. Alternatives are leading nowhere: 30...♔e6? 31.♗×e5! ♖e8 32.♖×f6+ ♗×f6 33.♗×f6+ ♔f7 34.♖f2= or 30...♖b7? 31.♗×e5 ♔e6 (31...f×e5 32.♖f×e5+ ♔d6 33.♖e6+ ♔d5 34.♖×e7) 32.♗×f6+! ♔×f5 33.♗×e7=.

31.♖ef2?! (D)



More tenacious was 31.♖f3 ♖h7 32.♖c3+ ♔b7, as the king belongs on e6 and thus Black would have a hard technical task ahead.

31...♖h6 32.♔b2 ♔d7 33.♖e2 ♗d6 34.♖f3 ♖c8!

Playable was 34...♔e6 as White cannot play 35.♖c3 ♗×a3+! 36.♔a2 ♖b6.

35.♗e1 ♔e6

Mission accomplished!

36.♖d3 ♖h7 37.♖g3 ♗c5 38.♔a2 ♖d7 39.♖c3 ♖cc7

Not of course 39...♖d1? 40.♗f2 ♗×f2 41.♖×c8 ♗d4 42.c3 ♔d7 43.♖f8 ♗×c3 44.b4 ♔e7∞.

40.h4 ♖d1 41.♗f2 ♗d6 42.♖g3 e4!

The central black pawn phalanx starts rolling!

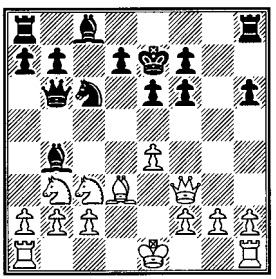
43.♖×e4+

43.♖g1 ♖×g1 44.♗×g1 f5−+

43...♗e5 44.♖×e5+
44.c3 ♖d2+ 45.♔b1 ♖×f2−+
44...f×e5 45.♔b2 ♖d2 0-1

The last game to conclude the "Sicilian Defense" theme is also quite instructive. Black held off all White's attacking threats and then converted the endgame to a win.

(66) Vouldis – Grivas
Komotini 1992
Sicilian Defense [B33]
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♕b6 5.♘b3 ♘f6 6.♘c3 e6 7.♗g5 ♗b4 8.♗d3 h6 9.♗×f6 g×f6 10.♕f3 ♔e7! (D)



The safest spot for the black king, supporting and being surrounded by a mass of pawns.

11.0-0 a6 12.♕g3
A plan involving ♘d2-c4 seems preferable.

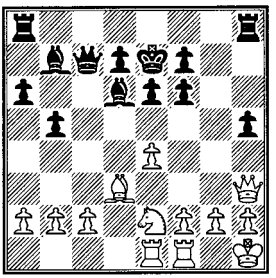
12...♗d6! 13.♕h4
After 13.♕g7 ♕d8! and ...♕g8 White will have to suffer in an inferior ending.

13...♘e5! 14.♔h1 ♘g6 15.♕h5 ♘f4
Now in order to achieve the f4-advance White will first have to play g3, weakening the long h1-a8 diagonal which the c8-bishop will shortly occupy. In general, White faces serious problems to come up with a decent plan.

16.♕f3 h5! 17.♖ae1 ♗e5
Black's superiority increases with every move. White now resolves to free his position by exchanges.

18.♘e2!? ♘×e2
18...♘g6! seems better.

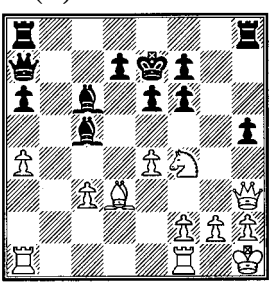
19.♕×e2 ♕c7! 20.♕e3 ♗f4 21.♕h3 b5 22.♘d4 ♗b7 23.♘e2 ♗d6 (D)



Now White has to seriously consider his next plan and his next moves. It is not an easy decision to take as it seems that something has gone wrong for him or maybe it was just the "Grivas Sicilian" (4...♕b6)?

24.a4!?
Playing f4 would weaken rather than activate White's position. But this change of direction (from the kingside to the queenside) is further evidence that White is lacking a plan. With time-pressure approaching, White decides to complicate the position by any means instead of awaiting fate. This approach can only be commended from a practical viewpoint.

24...b×a4! 25.♖a1 a3! 26.b×a3 ♗c5?! 27.a4 ♗c6 28.c3 ♕a7 29.♘f4! (D)



29...h4

29...♗×f2? would in general open lines towards the black king and, more specifically, would lead to severe problems after 30.♕f3!.

30.♖ae1! ♗×a4 31.e5! f×e5 32.♖×e5 ♗d6 33.♖a5 ♗×f4?

A serious mistake. Simply 33...♗c6 34.♖×a6 ♕b7 35.♖×a8 ♕×a8 leaves Black clearly better.

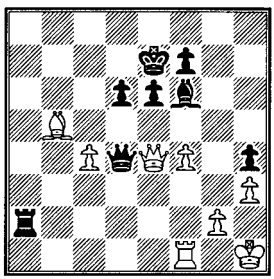
34.♖×a4 ♕c7 35.♖×a6 ♖×a6 36.♗×a6 ♗e5 37.c4 ♗f6 38.♗b5 ♖b8 39.♕a3+ d6 40.♕e3 ♖a8

Time trouble has passed and Black retains a plus. However, the presence of opposite-color bishops makes the conversion of this plus to a full point rather problematic.

41.♕e4 ♖a2 42.h3?

White had to play 42.g3!. The black h-pawn will prove fatal!

42...♕b6! 43.f4 ♕d4! (D)



By exchanging queens, Black increases his advantage, as he can now create a passed pawn while at the same time prevent the white king from actively participating.

44.♕×d4

White can hardly avoid the exchange. After 44.♕b7+ ♔f8, Black is threatening 45...♖a1 46.♖×a1 ♕×a1+ 47.♔h2 ♗d4!.

44...♗×d4 45.f5

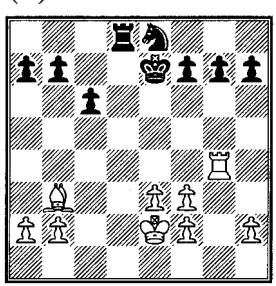
Black was planning ...♗f2, ...f5 and ...e5-e4 – thus White's reply. In any case, Black now coasts to victory without difficulty, by just using correctly his e-pawn!

45...♖c2! 46.f×e6 f×e6 47.♖e1 ♗f2 48.♖f1 ♗g3 49.♔g1 e5 50.♖d1 e4 51.♔f1 ♖f2+ 52.♔g1 ♖b2 53.♗a6 e3 54.c5 d×c5 55.♔f1 ♖f2+ 56.♔g1 ♖a2 0-1

Of course, doubled f-pawns do not just occur in positions like Sicilian Defense types, but nearly in every opening. Here we will study some queen's pawn games with this theme:

(67) Najdorf – Stahlberg
Zurich 1953
Queen's Gambit Declined [D67]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♗g5 ♗e7 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♘f3 0-0 7.♖c1 c6 8.♗d3 d×c4 9.♗×c4 ♘d5 10.♗×e7 ♕×e7 11.♘e4 e5 12.0-0 e×d4 13.♕×d4 ♘7b6 14.♗b3 ♗g4 15.♘g3 ♗×f3 16.g×f3 ♕f6 17.♕×f6 ♘×f6 18.♘f5 ♖ad8 19.♖fd1 ♘c8 20.♔f1 ♖fe8 21.♔e2 ♔f8 22.♖×d8 ♖×d8 23.♖g1 ♘e8 24.♖g4 ♘e7 25.♘×e7 ♔×e7 (D)



Black has no weaknesses and White does (doubled and isolated pawns on the kingside), but the presence of pawns on both wings gives the better prospects to the side with the bishop.

26.♖e4+ ♔f8 27.♖a4 a6 28.♖f4 f6?!

This kind of moves that increase the power of the bishop and might give White a passed pawn (f4, e4-e5) should be avoided. Preferable was 28...♖d7 or, even better, 28...♘d6.

29.♖h4 h6 30.♖h5!

Now White is ready to advance his kingside majority.

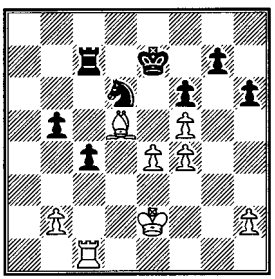
30...♘c7 31.f4 ♔e7 32.♖c5 ♖d6 33.♖c1?! b6?!

Both sides should have played f5 on their 33rd move.

34.f5! c5 35.f4 ♖c6 36.a4!

As Black plans to mobilize his pawn majority on the queenside, it is useful to open the a-file, as White might need it at a certain point.

36...b5 37.♗c2 ♘e8 38.♗e4 ♖c7 39.♗d5 c4 40.e4 ♘d6 41.a×b5 a×b5 (D)



White has maximized the potential of his bishop, which is now clearly superior to the knight. Also, the advance e5 is in the air (remember 28...f6?!).

42.♔e3 ♖a7 43.♖g1 ♔f8 44.♔d4 ♖c7 45.♖c1! ♘b7

Necessary, as White was threatening 46.b3, which can now be answered by 46...♘c5!. But this gives White time to take over the a-file.

46.♖a1 ♘c5 47.♖a8+ ♔e7 48.e5! ♘b3+ 49.♔c3 ♘c1

There is no salvation anymore, as two sample variations can prove: 49...♖c5 50.♖a7+ ♔d8 51.♗e4 f×e5 52.♖×g7 e×f4 53.f6+− and 49...f×e5 50.f×e5 ♖c5 51.♖a7+ ♔e8 52.♗f7+ ♔f8 53.e6 ♖×f5 54.♗g6 ♖e5 55.e7+ ♖×e7 56.♖a8+ with mate to follow.

50.♖g8 ♘e2+ 51.♔d2 ♘×f4 52.♖×g7+ ♔d8 53.e×f6 ♖d7

The tactical point after 53...♘×d5 is 54.♖g8+ ♔d7 55.f7.

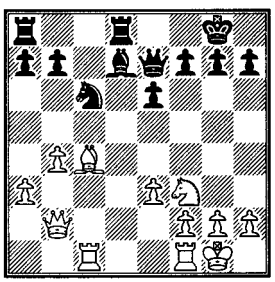
54.♖×d7+ ♔×d7 55.♗c6+! 1-0

Since after 55...♔d6 (55...♔×c6? 56.f7) 56.♗×b5 the black pawns fall, Black had to resign.

We conclude our theme with a quite recent game. Although far from flawless it nevertheless illustrates some interesting points:

(68) Eljanov – Kramnik
Moscow 2010
Nimzo-Indian Defense [E37]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 d5 5.a3 ♗×c3+ 6.♕×c3 ♘e4 7.♕c2 c5 8.d×c5 ♘c6 9.e3 ♕a5+ 10.♗d2 ♘×d2 11.♕×d2 d×c4 12.♗×c4 ♕×c5 13.♖c1 ♕e7 14.♘f3 0-0 15.b4 ♖d8 16.♕b2 ♗d7 17.0-0 (D)



White seems to stand slightly better, because of his better placed pieces, especially his queen on b2 which controls a lot of important squares.

17...♕f6!

An excellent idea. Black exchanges White's best-placed piece and takes control of the e5-square. His doubled

f-pawns cannot be attacked by White and cannot be considered weaknesses.

18.♕×f6 g×f6 19.♗e2!

A strong move, aiming to use the c-file for the white rook.

19...a5?!

This advance is weak. Not bad was 19...♖ac8 20.♖fd1 ♘e7 21.♖×c8 ♘×c8 22.♗d3 ♘b6 23.♗e4 ♖c8 when Black has counterplay.

20.b5

White could settle for a draw with 20.b×a5 ♖×a5 21.♖c3 but he was correctly looking for something more.

20...♘e7 21.♖fd1

21.♖c7? would be too naive: 21...♘d5! 22.♖×b7 ♗c8–+

21...♘d5?!

This is too ambitious. Black had to settle for 21...♖ac8 22.♖×c8 ♘×c8 23.♘d2 ♗e8 24.a4 b6 25.♘c4 ♖×d1+ 26.♗×d1 when the idea ♗f3-b7 does not work: 26...♗d7! 27.♗f3 (27.♗g4 ♔f8 28.f4 ♔e7 29.♔f2 f5 30.♗f3 ♔d8±) 27...e5 28.♗b7 ♗e6!.

22.e4!

White hurries. Also the prophylactic 22.g3!?, with the idea of e4, would give him a pleasant position: 22...f5 23.♘h4! and ♗f3.

22...♘f4 23.♗f1 e5

Good or bad this was forced in order to free the d7-bishop, but new a weakness has appeared – the f5-square.

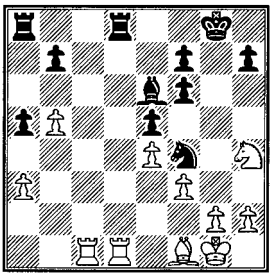
24.♘h4!

A blunder would be 24.♖c7? because of 24...♗×b5! 25.♖×d8+ ♖×d8 26.♗×b5 ♖d1+ 27.♗f1 ♘e2+.

24...♗g4

A bit better seems the immediate 24...♗e6 although White's position is preferable after 25.♖×d8+ ♖×d8 26.♖c7 ♖d1 27.f3 b6 28.♖c6±.

25.f3 ♗e6 (D)



26.♘f5?

There was no need for this. White could have gained a clear advantage with the simple 26.♖×d8+ ♖×d8 27.♖c7 b6 28.♖c6 ♖b8 (28...♖d1 29.♖×b6 ♖a1 30.♖b8+ ♔g7 31.b6 ♖×a3 32.b7 ♖b3 33.g3±) 29.♘f5! ♗×f5 30.e×f5 ♘d5 31.♗d3 ♔g7 32.♗e4 ♘e3 33.♔f2 ♘d1+ 34.♔e2 ♘b2 35.♗c2±.

26...♗×f5 27.e×f5 ♘d5

Now Black is fine.

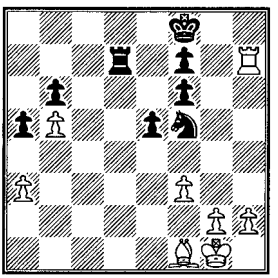
28.♖d3 ♖d7 29.♖c4?!

White had to start thinking of splitting the point (29.♖cd1) but he still remained ambitious...

29...♖ad8 30.♖a4 b6 31.♖g4+ ♔f8 32.♖h4 ♘e7!

Declining the draw (32...♔g7). Black's remaining pieces would be more active.

33.♖×d7 ♖×d7 34.♖×h7 ♘×f5 (D)



35.♖h5?

The alternative was 35.♖h8+ ♔g7 36.♖b8 (activity) 36...♖d2! 37.♖×b6 ♘e3 38.♖a6 when White seems to be doing well, despite his eventual loss of

the bishop, but Black can first play 38...f5! (38...♖d1? 39.♔f2 ♘×f1 40.♖×a5 ♘×h2 41.♖a4±) 39.♖×a5 f4 40.♖a4 ♖d1 41.♔f2 ♖×f1+ 42.♔e2 ♖b1 43.♖b4 ♖×b4 44.a×b4 ♘d5 45.♔d3 f5 46.♔c4 ♘b6+ −+. But he can play better: 38.a4! f5 39.♖c6 ♖d1 40.♔f2 ♘×f1 41.b6 when the draw should be not difficult, as the knight is badly placed.

35...♘e3 36.♔f2 ♘c2!

Black's full control of the dark squares hands him the advantage.

37.f4 e4 38.♖h8+ ♔g7 39.♖c8 ♖d2+ 40.♗e2 ♘×a3

And Black's advantage is already great.

41.♔e3 ♖b2 42.♖b8

Or 42.♖c3 ♘×b5 43.♗×b5 ♖×b5 44.♔×e4 f5+ 45.♔d3 ♖b1 and Black should win.

42...f5! 43.♗f1

On 43.♖×b6 ♘c2+ 44.♔d2 Black plays 44...♘b4+! 45.♔e1 a4 −+.

43...♖b1 44.♗e2 ♖b3+ 45.♔f2 ♘×b5?!

45...e3+! 46.♔g3 ♘c2 was lethal.

46.♖×b6 e3+ 47.♔g3 ♘d4 48.♖×b3 ♘×b3 49.♔f3?!

White could have still put up a fight with 49.♗b5! but of course Black still wins: 49...♘d4 50.♗d7 ♔f6 51.h3 ♔e7 52.♗a4 ♔d6.

49...a4 0-1

Conclusion

In general, the strategic element of doubled f-pawns is a very sensitive subject and only experience derived from practice can enable us to understand when to employ it and when to avoid it. Our decisions should be greatly influenced by the examination of the rest of our pawn structure, as well as the harmonious disposition of our army in its entirety.

Queen Sac around the King

Concept

A spectacular queen sacrifice is a pleasure to watch and makes the game notable for future generations. Well, in practice, games won spectacularly are awarded one point, just like games won more mundanely, and this seems to be fair from a sporting point of view. But of course it is always a pleasure (for the winner at least!) to win by sacrificing the queen around the opponent's king. I do not mean a sacrifice for positional or long-term benefits, but a straightforward sacrifice to finish the game.

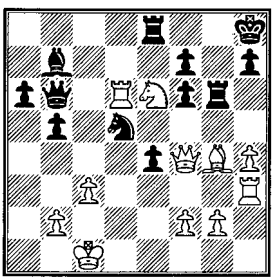
Twelve beautiful examples will be examined below, some simple, some quite complicated, but all of them spectacular and effective. Try to solve them alone before you go on to the solutions.

(69) Kasparov – Kramnik

Novgorod 1994

Sicilian Defense [B33]

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘ge2 ♘f6 4.d4 c×d4 5.♘×d4 e5 6.♘db5 d6 7.♗g5 a6 8.♘a3 b5 9.♘d5 ♗e7 10.♗×f6 ♗×f6 11.c3 0-0 12.♘c2 ♖b8 13.h4 ♘e7 14.♘×f6+ g×f6 15.♕d2 ♗b7 16.♗d3 d5 17.e×d5 ♕×d5 18.0-0-0 e4 19.♗e2 ♕×a2 20.♕h6 ♕e6 21.♘d4 ♕b6 22.♖h3 ♔h8 23.♗g4 ♖g8 24.♘e6 ♖g6 25.♕f4 ♖e8 26.♖d6 ♘d5 (D)



Our first example involves two of the most recent former world champions; it is not only spectacular but also very instructive.

27.h5!!

A forced – and good – queen sac. 27.♖×b6? ♘×f4 28.♘×f4 ♖×g4 is only equal.

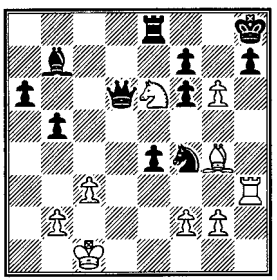
27...♘×f4

Black is also forced to accept the sacrifice, as his alternatives don't help: 27...♕a5 28.h×g6 ♕a1+ 29.♔c2 ♘b4+ 30.c×b4 ♖c8+ 31.♘c5+–; 27...♖g7 28.♕h6+–; 27...♖×g4 28.♕×g4 ♖g8 29.♕×g8+ ♔×g8 30.♖×b6 ♘×b6 31.♖g3+ ♔h8 32.♘c5+–; 27...f×e6 28.h×g6 ♘×f4 29.♖×h7+ ♔g8 30.♖×b6+–; 27...♖×e6 28.♖×d5 (28.h×g6 ♘×f4 29.♖×h7+ ♔g8 30.g×f7+ ♔f8 31.♖h8+ ♔×f7 32.♗×e6+ ♘×e6 33.♖×b6+–) 28...♗×d5 29.h×g6 f×g6 30.♕h6+–; 27...♖gg8 28.♖×d5! ♖×e6 29.♖d7!+– (29.♗×e6 ♕×e6 30.♖d6+–).

28.h×g6!

If 28.♖×b6?, then there would be not a queen sacrifice, but White would be lost after 28...♖×g4 29.♘×f4 ♖×f4 30.♖×b7 ♖×f2–+.

28...♕×d6 (D)



There is not much hope in the other options either: 28...♘d3+ 29.♖h×d3! (29.♔b1? ♕×f2 30.♖×h7+ ♔g8 31.♖g7+ ♔h8 32.♖h7±) 29...e×d3 (29...♕×f2 30.g×f7+–; 29...♕a5 30.g×f7 ♕a1+ 31.♔d2 ♕×b2+ 32.♔e1 ♕c1+ 33.♗d1 ♖f8 34.♖d8!) 30.g×f7+–; 28...♘×h3 29.g×f7! ♕c6 30.♖×c6 ♗×c6 31.f×e8♕+ ♗×e8 32.♗×h3+–; 28...f×e6 29.♖×h7+ ♔g8 30.♖×b6 ♗c8 31.♖c6 f5 32.♗h3 ♘×g6 33.♖hc7+–.

29.♖×h7+ ♔g8 30.g×f7+ ♔×h7 31.f×e8♕ ♘×e6 32.♗f5+!

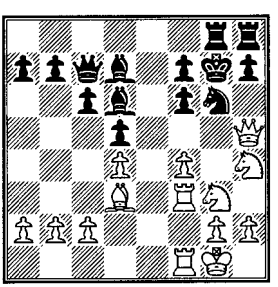
Accuracy to the end. Not so clear would be the natural 32.♗×e6?! ♕e5.

32...♔g7 33.♕g6+ ♔f8 34.♕×f6+ ♔e8 35.♗×e6 ♕f8? 1-0

This loses outright, but even the "best" try with 35...e3 36.f×e3 ♗×g2 37.♗f7+ ♔d7 38.♗e8+ ♔c7 39.♕g7+ ♔d8 40.♗×b5 ♗f3 41.♗a4+– could not save Black, who now resigned in view of 36.♗d7+.

(70) Mackenzie – Mason
Paris 1878
French Defense [C01]

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e×d5 e×d5 5.♘f3 ♗d6 6.♗d3 0-0 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.♗g5 ♘e7 9.♗×f6 g×f6 10.♘h4 ♔g7 11.♕h5 ♖h8 12.f4 c6 13.♖f3 ♘g6 14.♖af1 ♕c7 15.♘e2 ♗d7 16.♘g3 ♖ag8 (D)



A well-known position which can be found in most combinational training media.

17.♕h6+!

The black king gets a dinner invitation, unfamiliar with the fact that he will be the main dish!

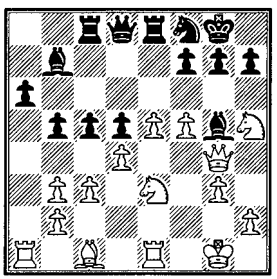
17...♔×h6 18.♘hf5+ ♗×f5 19.♘×f5+ ♔h5 20.g4+

Also good enough is 20.♖h3+ ♘h4 21.♖×h4+ ♔g6 22.♖h6#.

20...♔×g4 21.♖g3+ ♔h5 22.♗e2# 1-0

(71) Halen – Biever
Basel 1959
Ruy Lopez [C88]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 b5 6.♗b3 ♗e7 7.♖e1 ♘a5 8.♘×e5 ♘×b3 9.a×b3 0-0 10.d3 ♖e8 11.f4 ♗b7 12.♘g4 d5 13.e5 ♘d7 14.♘c3 ♘f8 15.d4 c5 16.♘e2 ♕d7 17.♘g3 ♖ac8 18.c3 ♗h4 19.♘h5 ♕f5 20.♘e3 ♕d7 21.g3 ♗e7 22.f5 ♗g5 23.♕g4 ♕d8 (D)



Black's position looks (and it is) miserable: a pawn down and badly placed pieces. But there is more to come!

24.♘×g7!?

Although this looks spectacular, the "cold" 24.♘c2 h6 25.h4+- was objectively best.

24...♔×g7 25.f6+ ♔g6?!

The alternative 25...♔h8 26.♕×g5 ♘e6 27.♕h5 c×d4 28.♘f5 ♕d7 29.♗h6 was also curtains, although Black should have tried it (or resign here!).

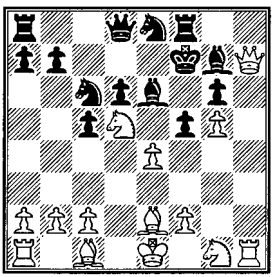
26.♕f5+ ♔h5 27.g4+ ♔h6 28.h4 ♘e6 29.♕×g5+!

The usual (effective) stuff!

29...♘×g5 30.♘f5+ ♔g6 31.h5# 1-0

(72) Liu – Donner
Buenos Aires 1978
Pirc Defense [B07]

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 g6 4.♗e2 ♗g7 5.g4 h6 6.h3 c5 7.d5 0-0 8.h4 e6 9.g5 h×g5 10.h×g5 ♘e8 11.♕d3 e×d5 12.♘×d5 ♘c6 13.♕g3 ♗e6 14.♕h4 f5 15.♕h7+ ♔f7 (D)



The great Donner faces an "accident" in the hands of an unknown Chinese player:

16.♕×g6+!! ♔×g6 17.♗h5+ ♔h7 18.♗f7+! ♗h6 19.g6+!

The main point of the queen sac. Bad was 19.♖×h6+? ♔g7 20.♗×e6 ♘d4∓.

19...♔g7

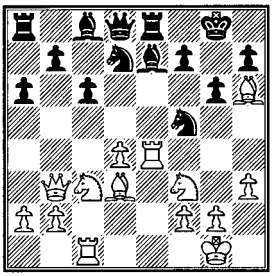
19...♔h8 20.♖×h6+ ♔g7 21.♖h7#

20.♗×h6+ 1-0

And Black resigned as he will get mated.

(73) Lobron – Sjodahl
New York 1994
Queen's Gambit Declined [D65]

1.c4 e6 2.♘c3 d5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗e7 5.e3 ♘bd7 6.♖c1 0-0 7.♘f3 a6 8.c×d5 e×d5 9.♗d3 c6 10.♕c2 ♖e8 11.0-0 ♘f8 12.h3 g6 13.♖fe1 ♘e6 14.♗h6 ♘g7 15.♕b3 ♘d7 16.e4 d×e4 17.♖×e4 ♘f5 (D)



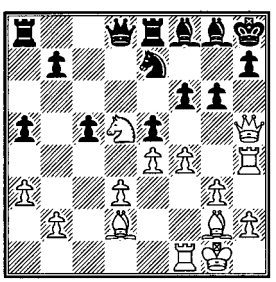
At first sight this position looks like the stuff of natural, isolated d-pawns, where White has his usual development and space advantage, with a long battle to be expected. But if you dig deep enough, you will discover the weakness of the black king and especially of the weak f7-square.

18.♕×f7+! 1-0

Black resigned as 18...♔h8 19.♘g5 ♘f6 20.♖h4 or 18...♔×f7 19.♗c4+ ♔f6 20.♖e6+ ♔f7 21.♖d6# is more than convincing.

(74) Skalik – Wojtkiewicz
Katowice 1995
English Opening [A34]

1.c4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.g3 d5 4.c×d5 ♘×d5 5.♗g2 ♘c7 6.♘f3 ♘c6 7.0-0 e5 8.d3 ♗e7 9.♘d2 ♗d7 10.♘c4 f6 11.♘e3 0-0 12.♘ed5 ♘×d5 13.♘×d5 ♗d6 14.♗d2 ♔h8 15.♖c1 a5 16.a3 ♖e8 17.♖c4 ♗e6 18.♖h4 ♗f8 19.e4 ♘e7 20.♕h5 ♗g8 21.f4 g6 (D)



The late Alex Wojo falls victim to a nice queen sac:

22.♕×h7+! ♗×h7 23.♘×f6 ♔g7?!

Objectively better was 23...♕d4+ 24.♔h1 ♗h6 25.♖×h6 ♔g7 26.♖×h7+ ♔×f6 27.f×e5+ ♔×e5 28.♗c3±, but no one likes to defend such an endgame.

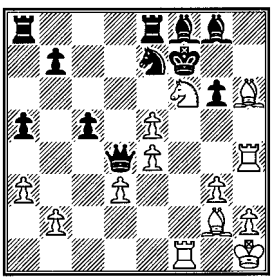
24.f×e5 ♕d4+ 25.♔h1 ♗g8

25...♔f7 26.♖×h7+ ♔e6 27.♗c3 and it's all over.

26.♗h6+?!

White starts to mix things up. 26.♘×e8+ ♖×e8 27.♗h6+ ♔h8 28.♗×f8+ ♗h7 29.♖f7 was easy and effective.

26...♔f7 (D)



27.♘d7+?

Throwing the win away. The simple 27.♘×e8+ ♔×e8 28.♖×f8+ ♔d7 29.♖×a8 ♕×b2 30.♖f4± was to be expected.

27...♘f5!

Of course not 27...♔e6? 28.♗h3+ ♘f5 29.♘×f8+ ♖×f8 30.e×f5+ +-.

28.♘×f8

28.e×f5 ♗×h6 29.♖×d4 c×d4 30.♗×b7 ♖ad8∓

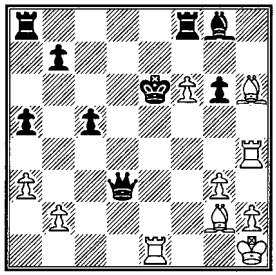
28...♕×d3?

Black returns the favor. Good enough was the simple 28...♖×f8 29.e×f5 ♕×b2 30.f×g6+ ♔e7∓.

29.e×f5?

White again "declines" to take chances. Unclear was 29.e6+! ♖×e6 30.e×f5 g×f5 31.♘×e6 ♔×e6 32.♖hf4.

29...♖×f8 30.e6+ ♔e7 31.f6+ ♔×e6 32.♖e1+?! (D)



Wrong, as now Black is close to winning (after many mutual mistakes). A somewhat better try was 32.♖e4+ ♕×e4 33.♗×e4 ♖×f6∓.

32...♔d6?

Probably Black was moving quicker than his thoughts. Simple and decisive was 32...♔d7 33.♖e7+ ♔d8.

33.♗f4+! ♔d7 34.♖e7+ ♔d8 35.♗c7+

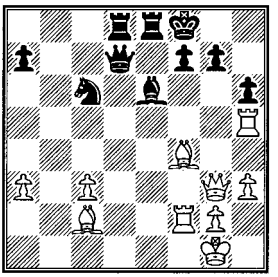
Oops! The difference is obvious.

35...♔c8 36.♗h3+ ♕f5 37.♗×f5+ g×f5 38.♗e5 0-1

Now that White finally is winning, he lost on time! What can someone say about such a game? Maybe just "Farewell, Dear Alex."

(75) Kunte – van Dijk
Ottawa 2007
Queen's Gambit Declined [D37]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗e7 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.♗f4 0-0 6.e3 c5 7.d×c5 ♗×c5 8.♕c2 ♘c6 9.a3 ♕a5 10.♘d2 ♗b4 11.c×d5 e×d5 12.♗d3 d4 13.0-0 ♗×c3 14.♘c4 ♕h5 15.b×c3 d×e3 16.♖ae1 e×f2+ 17.♖×f2 ♗e6 18.♘e5 ♘g4 19.♘×g4 ♗×g4 20.♖b1 ♖ad8 21.h3 ♗e6 22.♖×b7 h6 23.♖b5 ♕h4 24.♖c5 ♘b8 25.♕e2 ♕e7 26.♖h5 ♕d7 27.♗c2 ♖fe8 28.♕f3 ♘c6 29.♕g3 ♔f8 (D)



The presence of so many attacking white pieces around the black king is obvious. In such situations the attacking side is usually able to benefit from his strategic superiority with a tactical shot.

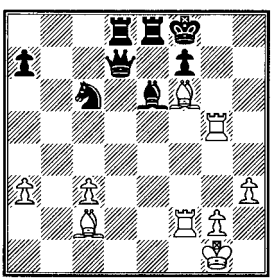
30.♕×g7+!

Although 30.♖×h6 also wins, the text move is decisive and elegant.

30...♔×g7

The lesser evil was 30...♔e7 31.♗e5! ♖g8 (31...♘×e5 32.♕f6+ ♔f8 33.♖×h6) 32.♗f6+ ♔d6 33.♖d2+.

31.♗×h6+ ♔g8 32.♖g5+ ♔h8 33.♗g7+ ♔g8 34.♗f6+ ♔f8 (D)



35.♗h7!

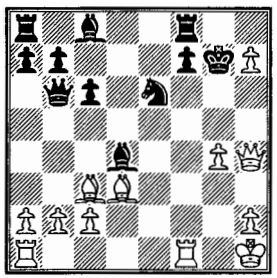
The remaining white pieces finish the job!

35...♘e7 36.♗g7# 1-0

(76) Petrosian,T.L. – Minasian
Yerevan 2006
Ruy Lopez [C67]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 ♘f6 4.0-0 ♘×e4 5.♕e2 ♘g5 6.♘×g5 ♕×g5 7.d4 ♕e7 8.d×e5 ♘d4

9.♕d3 ♕×e5 10.♗d2 ♘e6 11.♖e1 ♕d6 12.♕h3 ♗e7 13.♗d3 c6 14.♘c3 ♕c7 15.f4 g6 16.g4 0-0 17.f5 ♘g5 18.♕e3 ♗f6 19.♖f1 d5 20.f×g6 d4 21.g×h7+ ♔g7 22.♕e1 d×c3 23.♗×c3 ♕b6+ 24.♔h1 ♗d4 25.♕h4 ♘e6 (D)



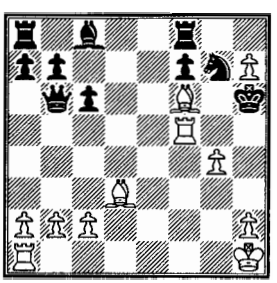
White has sacrificed a piece, achieving in return an unstoppable attack.

26.♕f6+!

26.♖×f7+! ♔×f7 (26...♖×f7 27.h8♕#) 27.♖f1+ ♔e8 28.♖×f8+ ♘×f8 29.♗×d4 ♕×d4 30.h8♕+− was quite convincing as well.

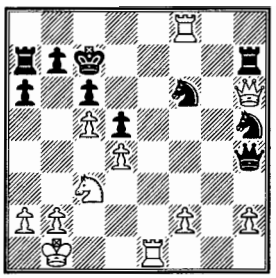
26...♗×f6 27.♗×f6+ ♔h6 28.♖f5! ♘g7 (D)

Not ruining such a rare and glorious mating construction: 28...♘g5 29.♖×g5 ♗×g4 30.♖×g4 ♕f2 31.♖f1+−; 28...♕c5 29.♖af1+−.



29.♖h5+! ♘×h5 30.g5# 1-0

(77) Milov – Luther
Merida 2003
Slav Defense [D11]
1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.e3 a6 5.♗d3 ♗g4 6.♕b3 ♗×f3 7.g×f3 ♖a7 8.♘c3 e6 9.c5 ♘bd7 10.♗d2 e5 11.♕c2 g6 12.f4 e×d4 13.e×d4 ♗h6 14.0-0-0 0-0 15.f5 ♗×d2+ 16.♕×d2 ♘h5 17.♖hg1 ♕h4 18.♔b1 ♘df6 19.f×g6 f×g6 20.♗×g6 h×g6 21.♕h6 ♔f7 22.♕×g6+ ♔e7 23.♖de1+ ♔d8 24.♕h6 ♖f7 25.♖g8+ ♔c7 26.♖f8 ♖h7 (D)



27.♘a4!!

The text move comes completely unexpectedly. The knight suddenly joins the mating attack. There was another winning option: 27.♕g6 ♖d7 28.♖ee8 ♘×e8 29.♕×e8 ♖d8 30.♕e5+ ♔c8 31.♖f7 ♖d7 32.♕f5 ♕d8 33.♘a4+− but 27.♘a4!! is much more spectacular (and effective of course). The alternatives are of no real help: 27...♕h3 28.♘b6 ♖×h6 29.♖e7+ followed by 30.♖c8 mate or 27...♕×f2 28.♕×h7+! ♘×h7 29.♖e7#.

28.♘b6

Here it was not too late for White to make a mistake: 28.♖e7+? ♘d7 29.♘b6 and it seems that there is no defense against 30.♖c8 but... 29...♕e4+!! changes the evaluation. Still, White could still draw after 30.♔c1 ♕e1+ 31.♔c2 ♕e2+ 32.♔c1 ♕c4+ 33.♔b1 ♕f1+ with perpetual check.

28...♕e4+

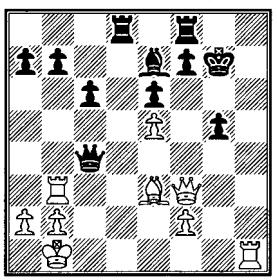
28...♕h3 29.♖e7+ ♕d7 30.♖c8#

29.♖×e4 1-0

And Black resigned as he can not avoid mate. With the exception of the king and some pawns, White used all his pieces to deliver mate to the black king!

(78) Apicella – Bauer
Aix les Bains 2003
Caro-Kann Defense [B19]

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 d×e4 4.♘×e4 ♗f5 5.♘g3 ♗g6 6.♘f3 ♘d7 7.h4 h6 8.h5 ♗h7 9.♗d3 ♗×d3 10.♕×d3 e6 11.♗f4 ♘gf6 12.0-0-0 ♗e7 13.♔b1 0-0 14.♘e4 ♕a5 15.♘×f6+ ♘×f6 16.♘e5 ♖ad8 17.♕g3 ♔h8 18.♖d3 ♘d5 19.♗d2 ♕b6 20.c4 ♘f6 21.♗e3 ♕a5 22.♖b3 ♕a6 23.♕f3 ♔g8 24.g4 ♘d7 25.g5 ♘×e5 26.d×e5 h×g5 27.h6 ♕×c4 28.h×g7 ♔×g7 (D)



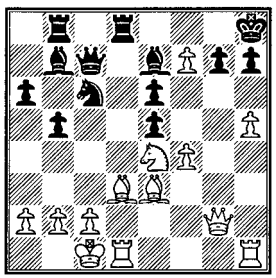
It seems that Black can parry White's attack and, being two pawns up, even win the game. But White has at his disposal a well hidden ace:

29.♗×g5! ♗×g5 30.♕f6+!! 1-0

A wonderful finish! Black resigned in view of 30...♗×f6 31.♖g3+ ♕g4 32.♖×g4+ ♗g5 33.♖×g5#.

(79) Smeets – Werle
Groningen 2002
Sicilian Defense [B80]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 ♘c6 6.f3 e6 7.♗e3 ♗e7 8.♕d2 a6 9.g4 ♕c7 10.0-0-0 ♘×d4 11.♕×d4 0-0 12.g5 ♘d7 13.h4 ♘e5 14.f4 ♘c6 15.♕d2 b5 16.h5 ♖d8 17.g6 ♗f6 18.♗d3 ♖b8 19.e5 d×e5 20.♘e4 ♗e7 21.g×f7+ ♔h8 22.♕g2 ♗b7 (D)



White's attack seems to be strong enough, but still the question of how to continue remains difficult. Or perhaps not?

23.♕g6!!

A beautiful move, revealing the heart of a true attacker. White makes no secrets about his wish to mate opponent's king.

23...♘b4

The other options were: 23...h×g6? 24.h×g6+ ♗h4 25.♖×h4#; or 23...♖×d3 24.♖dg1 ♖d1+ 25.♔×d1 ♕d8+ 26.♔c1 ♕f8 27.♗c5 ♖d8 28.♘g5+−.

24.♖dg1! ♗f8

Or 24...♘×d3+ 25.♔b1 ♖g8 26.c×d3+−.

25.♘f6!

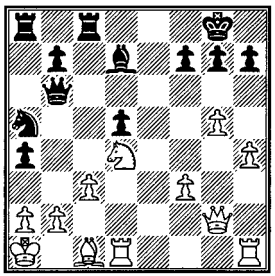
Good enough was as well 25.♘g5+−.

25...♘×d3+ 26.♔b1 h×g6 27.h×g6+ ♗×h1 28.♖×h1# 1-0

(80) Daskalov – Evstatiev
Sofia 2004
Sicilian Defense [B80]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗c4 e6 7.♗e3 ♗e7 8.f3 d5 9.e×d5 e×d5 10.♗b3 0-0 11.♕d2 ♘c6 12.0-0-0 ♘a5 13.♘ce2 ♘×b3+ 14.♘×b3

♗d7 15.g4 ♗c6 16.♘bd4 ♖e8 17.♘g3 ♘d7 18.♘gf5 ♘e5 19.♘×e7+ ♕×e7 20.♗f4 ♘c4 21.♕f2 ♖ec8 22.♔b1 ♕b4 23.♗c1 a5 24.h4 a4 25.g5 ♗d7 26.c3 ♕b6 27.♔a1 ♘a5 28.♕g2 (D)



It is always a pleasure when you can win a game with a queen sacrifice, but sometimes this just does not work and here we have one of these "nasty" cases. Black should continue with 28...a3! 29.h5 a×b2+ 30.♕×b2 ♕c7∓.

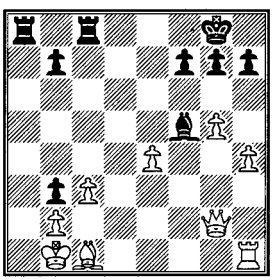
29.♖×d4

29.c×d4? ♘b3+ 30.♔b1 (30.a×b3 a×b3+ 31.♔b1 ♗f5+) 30...♗f5+

29...♘b3+ 30.a×b3?

But White falls for the decoy. He could have put Black's sacrifice into question with 30.♔b1! ♗f5+ 31.♖e4 ♘c5 32.♖he1 d×e4 33.f×e4 ♘×e4 34.♔a1 ♘c5 35.a3±.

30...a×b3+ 31.♔b1 ♗f5+ 32.♖e4 d×e4 33.f×e4 (D)



33...♖a4!

That's what White missed.

34.♗e3

34.e×f5 ♖ca8 and Black mates. But also now Black easily wins the endgame.

34...♗×e4+ 35.♕×e4 ♖×e4 36.♗d4 ♖ce8 37.♔c1 ♖e2 38.h5 b5 39.h6 g×h6 40.♖×h6?! 0-1

White resigned "in time" in the face of the coming mate after 40...♖c2+ 41.♔d1 ♖a8.

The last game is not actually a queen sacrifice but a pure blunder! Beware: sometimes the queen is blundered and not sacrificed! In some ways this should serve as a warning to not get too carried away by the previous examples, but base such sacrifices on a firm foundation...

(81) Erdogdu – Howell
Khanty Mansiysk 2010
Giuoco Piano [C54]

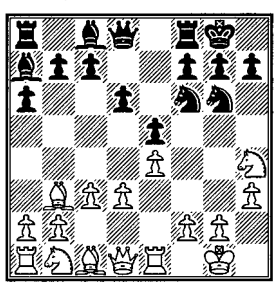
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.c3 ♘f6 5.d3 a6 6.0-0 ♗a7 7.♖e1 d6 8.♗b3 0-0 9.h3 ♘e7

A move in fashion, planning to regroup the knight on g6 and freeing the c-pawn.

10.♘h4

Most often met is 10.♘bd2 c6 11.♘f1 ♘g6 12.♘g3 h6 13.d4 ♕c7 14.♗e3 ♖e8 15.♗c2± Volokitin-Zhou Jianchao, Khanty Mansiysk 2007.

10...♘g6 (D)



11.♗g5?!

It seems that White had to go for 11.♘×g6 h×g6 12.♗g5 ♕e8 13.♘d2

♗e6 14.♘c4 ♘h7 15.♗e3± Jaracz-Delchev, Arnhem 1990.

11...♔h8!

A good reply. White should be happy after 11...♘×h4 12.♗×h4 h6 13.♘d2 ♕e7 14.♘f1 ♗e6 15.♘e3 ♖ab8 16.♘d5 ♗×d5 17.e×d5 ♖be8 18.d4 ♕d8 19.d×e5 ♖×e5 20.♕f3± Bojkovic-Belic, Cetinje 1990.

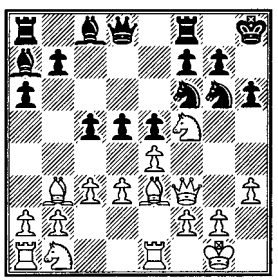
12.♘f5

The alternative, 12.d4, is not good because Black can play 12...h6! 13.♘×g6+ f×g6 14.♗e3 ♘×e4 15.d×e5? (15.♘d2 e×d4 16.c×d4 ♗f5∓) 15...♘×f2 16.♕d2 ♘×h3+ 17.g×h3 ♖f3 18.♗×a7 ♖g3+ 19.♔h2 ♕h4 0-1 Krayz-Khmelniker, Israel 2002.

12...h6 13.♗e3 c5!?

Black would also have an easy game after the natural 13...♗×e3 14.f×e3 (14.♘×e3 ♘f4) 14...d5 15.♘d2 d×e4 16.d×e4 ♗e6 17.♗×e6 f×e6 18.♘g3 or 13...♗×f5 14.e×f5 ♘h4 15.♗×a7 ♖×a7 16.d4∞.

14.♕f3 d5 (D)



15.e×d5?

A bad blunder. Unfortunately 15.♘×h6 did not work because of 15...c4! (15...g×h6 16.♗×h6 ♖g8 17.♗g5∞/=) 16.♗×a7 ♖×a7 17.d×c4 d×c4 18.♗×c4 g×h6 19.♕e3 b6 20.♕×h6+ ♘h7∓ but White had try 15.♘g3 ♗e6 16.♘a3=.

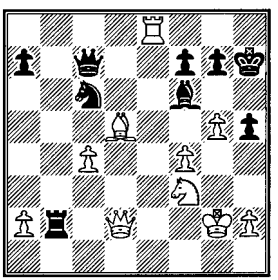
15...♗×f5 16.♕×f5 ♘h4! 0-1

And White had to resign as his queen will be lost after 17.♕×e5 ♗b8 18.d6 ♗×d6.

A King's Golden Cage

Concept

As I wrote in one of my several surveys, "Nowadays it is acceptable that all combinative motives can be categorized and learned by training methods." One more combination "pattern" we will examine in the present survey. Of course only the diagrammed positions for these examples could have been given, without any comments about the previous moves. But in my opinion, a combination is only the tip of the iceberg, a natural consequence of the chessplayer strategy. The reader should study how the game "produces" the critical moment of the potential combination; how this is born in the mind of the chessplayer. You see, combinations are not born in the sky but are the result of correct strategy and evaluation. (D)



White seems to be in trouble. His queen is attacked and 1.♗e4+ g6 2.♗c2 ♗g7∓ looks like his only defense. But the truth is different. The uncomfortable placement of the black king can decide the game in no time!

1.g6+! f×g6

Or 1...♔×g6 2.♗e4+ ♔h6 3.♖h8#. But now the golden cage has closed its gates!

2.♕×b2!

The second step: the black bishop must abandon the protection of the g5-square.

2...♗×b2 3.♘g5+ ♔h6 4.♖h8# 1-0

As always, this certain combination can be categorized, according to certain factors. These factors can be:

1. The back rank is not adequately protected.

2. There are or can be created, doubled g- (or b-) pawns in the opponent's castled position.

3. The queen can be sacrificed, opening the road for the rooks (or other pieces).

4. The opponent's king can be driven to the h- (or a-) file.

5. The (doubled) rook(s) can deliver the final blow from the eighth rank.

"During a chess competition a chessmaster should be a combination of a beast of prey and a monk" – Alexander Alekhine.

(82) Alekhine – Colle
Paris 1925
Chigorin Defense [D07]

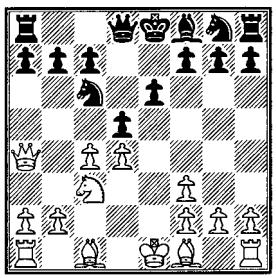
1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♘c6 3.♘f3 ♗g4 4.♕a4!? ♗×f3

The main alternative is 4...d×c4!? 5.e3 ♗×f3 6.g×f3 e5 7.d×e5 ♕d5 8.♘c3 ♕×f3 9.♖g1 ♕h5 10.♗g2 ♘ge7 11.f4 0-0-0 12.♕×c4 g5∞ Braun-Rodshtein, Budapest 2006.

5.e×f3 e6

Black has also tried 5...d×c4 6.♗×c4 ♕×d4 7.♘c3 e6 8.♗e3 (8.0-0 ♗d6 9.♖d1∞/= Portisch-Mariotti, Budapest 1975) 8...♕e5 9.♗b5 ♘ge7 10.0-0 0-0-0 11.♖ad1 ♖×d1 12.♖×d1 a5? (12...a6 13.f4 ♕h5 14.♗×a6! ♕a5 15.♕×a5 ♘×a5 16.♗d3±) 13.f4 ♕h5 14.b4! ♘d5 15.♘×d5 ♘×b4 (15...e×d5 16.b×a5 d4 17.a6!+–) 16.♗e2! ♕×e2 17.♕e8# 1-0 Inkiov-Dubois, Clichy 2001. Of course 5...e5? should be avoided: 6.d×e5 d4 7.♗d3 ♗b4+ 8.♗d2 ♗×d2+ 9.♘×d2 ♘ge7 10.f4± Da Silva Rocha-Grau, Carrasco 1938.

6.♘c3 (D)



6...♗b4?!

I do not really like the text move, which surrenders the bishop pair to White and improves his pawn structure. Black should have gone for the much better 6...♘ge7! 7.♗g5 (7.♗e3 g6 8.c×d5 e×d5 9.♗b5 ♗g7 10.0-0 0-0= Fuster-Bronstein, Budapest 1949) 7...♕d7 8.♖d1 (8.c×d5 ♘×d5 9.♗b5 ♗e7 10.♗×c6 b×c6 11.♗×e7 ♘×e7 12.0-0 0-0 13.♖ac1 ♖fb8 14.b3 a5= Gebhardt-Zaragatski, Hamburg 2005) 8...h6 9.♗f4 g5 10.♗e3 ♗g7 11.c×d5 e×d5 12.h4 0-0-0∞ Ivanov-Watson, New York 1984.

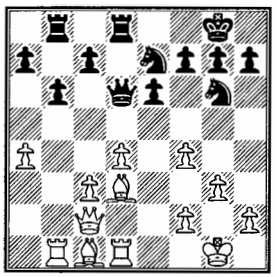
7.a3! ♗×c3+ 8.b×c3 ♘ge7 9.♖b1 ♖b8 10.c×d5 ♕×d5

The other capture with 10...e×d5 is also pleasant for White: 11.♗d3 0-0 12.♕c2 (12.0-0 ♕d6 [12...♘c8?! 13.♕c2 h6 14.a4 ♘b6 15.♕a2± Borocz-Ruck, Zalakaros 1995] 13.g3 ♘g6 14.♗b2 a6 15.♕c2 ♘ce7 16.h4 ♖fe8 17.h5 ♘f8 18.♗c1 h6 19.♗f4± Smistik-Novak, Svetla nad Sazavou 1996) 12...♘g6 13.0-0 ♖e8 14.f4 ♕d6 15.g3 ♘a5 16.f5 ♘f8 17.♗f4± Kempinski-Spyra, Karvina 1994. The bishop pair is like heaven, at least in this kind of position.

11.♗d3 0-0 12.0-0 ♕d6 13.♕c2 ♘g6 14.f4 ♘ce7

Not helpful is 14...♘×f4 15.♗×h7+ ♔h8 16.♗e4 ♘d5 17.♖e1±. Black is constantly under pressure...

15.g3 ♖fd8 16.♖d1 b6 17.a4 (D)



White enjoys a healthy advantage. His bishop pair and the possibility to seize the initiative 0n both flanks is a welcome concept for every strong player.

17...♘d5 18.♗d2?!

18.f5! is more accurate: 18...e×f5 19.♗×f5± as now Black cannot continue with 19...c5? because of 20.d×c5 ♕×c5 21.♖b5+−.

18...c5!

Black must create pawn weaknesses in White's camp to find some counterplay.

19.f5 e×f5 20.♗×f5 c×d4 21.c×d4 ♘de7 22.♗b4 ♕f6 23.♗×e7?!

White should maintain his slight advantage with 23.♗h3 ♘c6! (23...♖×d4?! 24.♕c7 ♖e8 25.♖e1 ♖dd8 26.♗g2±) 24.d5 ♘×b4 25.♖×b4 ♕d6 26.♖e4±.

23...♕×e7

Of course not 23...♘×e7? 24.♗×h7+ ♔f8 25.♗e4! ♖×d4 26.♖×d4 ♕×d4 27.♖d1 ♕e5 28.♖d7±.

24.♖bc1 ♖d5?

According to modern middlegame theory, Black had to create a passed pawn of his own to maintain equal chances. This is best done with 24...a6! 25.d5 b5 26.a×b5 a×b5=.

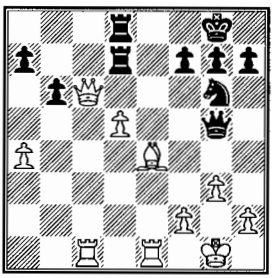
25.♗e4 ♖d7 26.d5 ♕f6

26...♖e8 27.♖e1 ♖dd8 28.♖e2 ♕d7 29.♖ce1 is another try for Black, although White retains his advantage.

27.♖e1 ♖bd8 28.♕c6?!

I rather like 28.♖cd1 ♘e7! 29.♖d3! (29.♗×h7+?! ♔f8 30.♗e4 ♘×d5) where White keeps a nice advantage.

28...♕g5? (D)



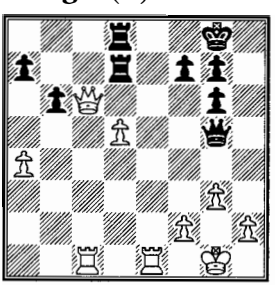
This is a fatal mistake, which allows a nice combination. Black had to continue with 28...♘e7! 29.♕×f6 (29.♕b5 g6 30.♖cd1 ♘f5 31.♕b4 [31.♗×f5 ♕×f5 32.♕a6=] 31...♘d6=) 29...g×f6 30.d6 ♖×d6 31.♖c7 ♖8d7 32.♗×h7+ ♔f8 33.♖×d7 ♖×d7 34.♗c2 ♖d2 35.♖c1±.

At first sight it would seem that Black has neutralized the dangerous passed d-pawn, and there is no way for White to make use of the Black's temporary weakness on the back rank.

29.♗×g6!

This looks quite strange, since now the d-pawn cannot be protected anymore. But Alekhine uses this move to support his strategic plan with tactical nuances.

29...h×g6? (D)



Obviously 29...♕×g6? was bad because of 30.♕×d7 with a simple mate threat, but what is wrong with Colle's move which, after all, opens a safe haven for the black king on h7? In fact the only move was 29...f×g6 though it wouldn't have changed White's decisive advantage: 30.♕e6+ ♖f7 (30...♔f8 31.♖c4! ♖f7 [31...♖×d5 loses nicely to 32.♖f4+ ♖f5 33.♖e5!!] 32.♖c8 wins) 31.♖c8 ♖×c8 (31...h6 32.f4; 31...♔f8 32.♕e8+ ♖×e8 33.♖c×e8#) 32.♕×c8+ ♖f8 33.♖e8 ♕f6 34.♖×f8+ ♕×f8 35.♕c7! (35.♕c6 ♕d8 36.d6 ♔f7 37.♕c4+ ♔f8 38.♕c7 ♔e8 39.♕×g7 ♕×d6 40.♕g8+ ♔d7 41.♕×h7+ ♔c6 42.h4!± but not 42.♕×a7? ♕d1+ 43.♔g2 ♕d5+ 44.f3 ♕d2+ 45.♔h3 ♕h6+ 46.♔g4 ♕h5+ 47.♔f4 ♕f5+ 48.♔e3=) 35...♕f3 36.♕b8+ ♕f8 37.♕×a7 ♕d6 38.♕b7 ♔f8 39.♔f1+−.

30.♕×d7!! ♖×d7 31.♖e8+

The correct rook. The alternative, 31.♖c8+? ♖d8−+, would have ruined an excellent combination.

31...♔h7 32.♖cc8

What an irony! The black pieces on the g-file create a burial site for their own king. There is no escape...

32...♖d8 33.♖e×d8! 1-0

33.♖c×d8? prolongs the game: 33...♕c1+ 34.♔g2 g5±. But now Black had to resign.

(83) Mamedyarov – Timofeev
Moscow 2004
Semi-Slav Defense [D45]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 c6 4.e3 ♘f6 5.♘f3 ♘bd7 6.♕c2 b6 7.♗d3 ♗b7 8.0-0 ♗e7 9.e4!?

Most players try 9.b3 here.

9...d×e4 10.♘×e4 ♘×e4 11.♗×e4 ♘f6 12.♘e5

12.♗d3 c5 seems to be fine for Black: 13.d×c5 ♗×c5= 14.b4?! ♗×b4 15.♕a4+ ♕d7 16.♕×b4 ♕×d3 17.♗a3 0-0-0 18.♖fe1 ♗×f3 19.♖e3 ♕d2 20.♖×f3 ♕×b4 21.♗×b4 ♖d4∓ Drozdovskij-Smeets, Oropesa del Mar 1998.

12...♖c8

Obviously 12...♕×d4? 13.♗×c6+ ♗×c6 14.♘×c6 favors White.

13.♖d1 ♘×e4

Black must capture the bishop, as after 13...0-0? 14.♗f3± he will face huge difficulties in advancing his c-pawn to c5.

14.♕×e4 0-0 15.♗f4 ♗a8

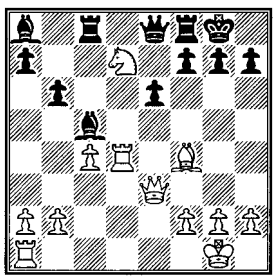
With 15...♗f6!? 16.♖d3 ♕e7 Black could obtain a position from the game Stefanova-S.Polgar, Vienna 1996 (with the white rook on f1 instead of a1), in which Polgar successfully neutralized her opponent's initiative and won.

16.♖d3 c5 17.♕e3!

Black would have an easy game after 17.d5 e×d5 18.c×d5 ♗d6=.

17...♕e8!

The text move avoids a devilish trap, which can be seen after 17...c×d4? 18.♖×d4 ♕e8 19.♘d7 ♗c5 (D)



20.♘f6+! g×f6 21.♗h6 ♗e4 (21...♔h8? 22.♗g7+! ♔×g7 23.♖g4+ ♔h8 24.♕h6 mates) 22.♕×e4 ♔h8 (22...f5? 23.♕g4+! f×g4 24.♖×g4+ ♔h8 25.♗g7+ ♔g8 26.♗f6#) 23.♖d2 ♖g8 24.♖ad1±.

18.d5?!

White should consider continuing 18.d×c5!? f6! (18...♗×c5?! 19.♕g3±)

19.♘d7 e5! (19...♗×c5? 20.♘×c5 ♖×c5 21.♗d6) 20.♗g3 (20.♘×f8 e×f4 21.♕×f4 ♗×f8 22.c×b6 a×b6 23.b3∞) 20...♗×c5 21.♕e2 ♖f7 22.♘×c5 ♖×c5 23.b3±.

18...e×d5 19.c×d5 c4!

19...♗d6 20.♕g3±.

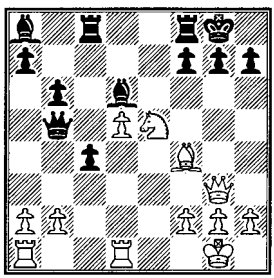
20.♖dd1

20.♖d2 ♗b4 21.♖dd1 ♗d6 does not change anything.

20...♗d6

Black would be also stand fine after 20...f6 21.♘g4 (21.d6? f×e5 22.d7 ♕g6; 21.♘c6 ♗×c6 22.d×c6 ♖×c6 23.♖e1 ♖f7) 21...♗c5 22.♕g3 ♕d7 23.♘e3 ♗×e3 24.f×e3 f5.

21.♕g3 ♕b5?! (D)



Black should have continued 21...♖c5! 22.♘×c4 (22.♘d3 ♗×f4 23.♘×f4 ♕e4 24.♖ac1 ♕f5∞) 22...♗×f4 23.♕×f4 ♖×d5=.

22.♘c6! ♗×f4 23.♘e7+ ♔h8 24.♕×f4 ♖cd8 25.♖d2 ♕c5 26.d6 ♖d7?!

White, helped by Black's 21st move, achieved an advantage, but Black's last move increases it. Better was 26...f5±.

27.♖c1 b5 28.♖c3!

Threatening ♖h3-h7+!.

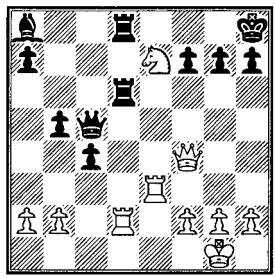
28...♖fd8

Black seems to be short of moves: 28...g6 29.♕f6#; 28...h6 29.♘g6+; 28...f5!? 29.♖e3±.

29.♖e3?!

White missed the strong 29.♕×f7! ♗e4 30.♖g3 ♕e5 31.f4 ♕f6 32.♕×f6 g×f6 33.♖d4 ♗b1 34.a4 a6 35.f5±.

29...♖×d6? (D)



The text move loses by force, as White can present the "usual combination." Bad was also 29...h6 30.♕×f7 ♕g5 31.♖g3 ♕f6 32.♘g6+ ♔h7 33.♘f8+ +− but Black should try the interesting and far from completely clear line with 29...♕b4!? 30.♖de2 ♕×d6 31.♕×f7 ♕d1+ 32.♖e1 ♕g4 33.f3 (33.♖g3? ♖d1!) 33...♕d4 34.♔f1 ♕f6 35.♘g6+! h×g6 36.♖e8+ ♔h7 37.♕g8+ ♔h6 38.h4! (38.♕h8+ ♔g5 39.♖8e5+ ♕×e5 40.♖×e5+ ♔f4 41.♖e8 ♖d1+ 42.♔f2 ♖1d2±) 38...g5! 39.♕h8+! (39.♖1e6 ♖d1±) 39...♔g6 40.h×g5 ♖×e8 41.♕×e8+ ♕f7 42.♕×a8 ♕d5 43.♕e8+ ♕f7 44.♕c8± or the modest but safe enough 29...f6! 30.♖e6 ♕g5 31.♕×g5 f×g5±.

30.♘g6+!! h×g6

The alternatives are 30...f×g6 31.♕×d6 ♖×d6 32.♖e8#; 30...♖×g6 31.♖×d8+; and 30...♔g8 31.♖×d6 ♕×d6 32.♕×d6 ♖×d6 33.♖e8.

31.♕h4+ ♕h5

Or 31...♔g8 32.♕×d8+ ♖×d8 33.♖×d8+ ♔h7 34.♖h3+ +−.

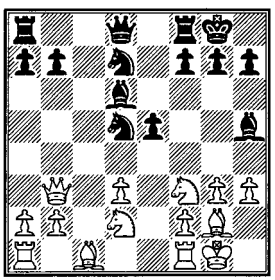
32.♕×d8+! ♖×d8 33.♖×d8+ ♔h7 34.♖ee8 1-0

Black resigned as the forced 34...g5 35.♖h8+ ♔g6 36.♖×h5 ♔×h5 37.♖×a8 leaves him a rook down.

(84) Azmaiparashvili – Shirov
Dubai 2002
Reti Opening [A07]

1.g3 d5 2.♗g2 ♘f6 3.d3 c6 4.♘d2 ♗g4 5.h3 ♗h5 6.♘gf3 ♘bd7 7.0-0 e5 8.e4 ♗d6 9.e×d5 c×d5 10.g4!?

The most usual move is 10.c4 0-0 (10...d4 11.♕e2 0-0 12.g4 ♗g6 13.♘h4 ♘c5 14.♘×g6 h×g6 15.b4± King-Norwood, Germany 1994) 11.c×d5 ♘×d5 12.♕b3 (12.♘c4!? ♗c7 13.♕b3 ♘5b6 14.♗g5! ♕e8 15.♖fe1 [15.♖ac1 ♘×c4? 16.♕×c4± Hodgson-De la Villa Garcia, Dos Hermanas 1992] 15...♔h8 16.♗d2 f6 17.♗b4 ♖g8 18.♘d4± Norwood-Girinath, Calcutta 1994) (D)



and now:

(a) 12...♘5f6 13.♘c4 (13.♘e4 ♘×e4 14.d×e4 ♘c5 15.♕d5 ♗×f3 16.♗×f3 ♕f6 17.♗g2 ♖fd8 18.♗e3 ♗f8 19.♕c4 ♘d3= Norwood-Adams, Plymouth 1989) 13...♘c5 (13...♗c7 14.♗e3 b6 15.♖fe1 ♖c8?! [15...a6 16.d4; 15...♖e8!?; 15...♖b8 16.d4] 16.d4 ♗×f3 [16...e×d4 17.♘×d4±; 16...e4 17.♘fe5 x c6, e4] 17.♗×f3 e4 [17...e×d4 18.♗×d4±] 18.♗g2 ♖e8 [18...a6!] 19.♖ac1± [19.♕b5!?] Vaganian-Torre, Moscow 1994) 14.♕a3 e4 (14...♗×f3 15.♗×f3 ♗e7 16.♘×e5 ♘cd7 17.♕c3 ♖c8 18.♕e1 ♗c5 19.♘×d7 ♕×d7 20.♔g2± Vaganian-Kaidanov, Glendale 1994) 15.d×e4 ♘c×e4 16.♘×d6 ♕×d6 17.♕×d6 ♘×d6 18.♗f4± Kogan-Jonkman, Lisbon 2000.

(b) 12...♘5b6 13.♘e4 ♗e7 14.a4 (14.♗e3 ♔h8 15.♖ac1± Bricard-Stefansson, Bischwiller 1999) 14...♔h8! (14...a5 15.♗e3 ♗b4 16.♖fc1 ♔h8 17.♘c5 [17.d4!?] 17...♘×c5 18.♗×c5 ♗×c5 19.♖×c5 f6= Foisor-Delgado Crespo, Benasque 2001; 14...♖b8? 15.a5 ♘c8 16.d4!± Ivanov,M-Kharitonov, Moscow 1995) 15.a5 f5!∞ Vaganian-Khalifman, Eupen 1994.

10...♗g6 11.♘h4 0-0 12.♘×g6 h×g6 13.c4

The alternative is 13.♘f3 ♖c8 14.♘h4 ♘b6 15.a4 a5∞ Haziev-Bakhtiyarova, Ufa 2004.

13...♘c5 14.♘b3

Or 14.c×d5 ♘×d3 15.♘c4 (15.♕b3 ♘f4) 15...♘×c1 16.♖×c1 ♖e8=.

14...d×c4 15.d×c4 ♕c7 16.♗e3

The alternative, 16.♘×c5 ♗×c5 17.g5 ♘h5 18.♕b3, is also unclear. But in general Black should happy with the outcome of the opening, since he is fighting on equal terms, having neutralized White's (minimal) opening edge.

16...e4!? 17.♘×c5

Bad is 17.g5?! ♘fd7∓.

17...♗×c5 18.♗×c5 ♕×c5 19.♕e2 ♖fe8 20.♖ac1

Interesting is 20.♖ad1 when Black should avoid 20...e3? 21.♗×b7 ♖ab8 22.♗d5 ♖×b2 23.♕×b2 e2 24.♕b5±.

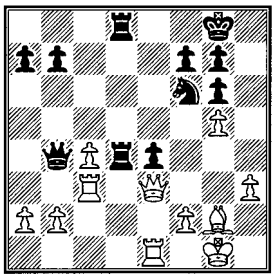
20...♖ad8 21.♖c3 ♖d4 22.♕e3 ♖ed8 23.♖e1?!

In my opinion White should have tried 23.g5 ♘h7 24.h4∞.

23...♕b4?!

Why not 23...g5! 24.a3 a5∓?

24.g5! (D)



24.a3?! ♕×b2 25.♖b3 ♕c2 26.♖×b7 ♖×c4 27.♖×a7 ♖d1 28.♖f1 ♖c8 is about equal, although it seems that White should be on the alert.

24...♖d3?

Black had to be satisfied with the modest 24...♘h7 25.♗×e4 ♕×b2 26.♖b3 ♕×a2 27.♗×b7 ♘×g5 28.♖a3 ♕d2 29.♕×d2 ♖×d2 30.♗d5 +=.

25.♕c1?!

A much better continuation than the game was the simple 25.♖×d3! ♖×d3 26.♕c1 ♘h5 27.♖×e4 ♖d2 28.a3 ♕×b2 29.♕×b2 ♖×b2 30.♖e8+ ♔h7 31.♖e7±. But keep in mind that this was a rapid game...

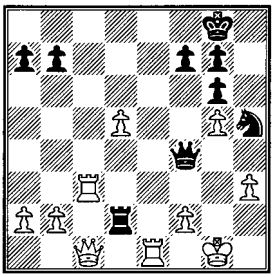
25...♘h5 26.♗×e4 ♖d2?

Too optimistic. Black had to play 26...♖×c3 27.♕×c3 ♕×c3 28.b×c3 b6 29.♗d5 ♘f4 30.♔h2 ♔f8!± (30...♘×d5?! 31.♖d1 ♔f8 32.c×d5 ♔e7 33.c4±).

27.♗d5! ♖8×d5

Black had counted on the text move when going in for this variation, as the alternatives are clearly lost for him: 27...♕×b2 28.♕×b2 ♖×b2 29.♖f3 ♔h7 30.♖e7+−; 27...♖×b2 28.a3 ♕b6 29.c5+−.

28.c×d5 ♕f4 (D)



29.♖f3?

An interesting moment of mutual blindness. Both players overlooked the well-known combination 29.♖e8+ ♔h7 30.♕×d2! ♕×d2 31.♖cc8 ♕×g5+ 32.♔f1 ♘g3+ 33.♔e1+−. The only logical explanation is that this was a rapid game, but still...

29...♕×f3 30.♕×d2 ♘f4

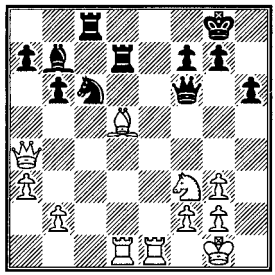
And now Black wins!

31.♕×f4 ♕×f4 32.♖d1 ♕×g5+ 33.♔f1 ♔f8 0-1

Sometimes we can come across similar patterns, which help us not to mate on the usual way, but just to win material or even strategical superiority. An excellent example is the following game between the two Ks:

(85) Kasparov – Karpov
Moscow 1985
Nimzo-Indian Defense [E21]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♘f3 0-0 5.♗g5 c5 6.e3 c×d4 7.e×d4 h6 8.♗h4 d5 9.♖c1 d×c4 10.♗×c4 ♘c6 11.0-0 ♗e7 12.♖e1 b6 13.a3 ♗b7 14.♗g3 ♖c8 15.♗a2 ♗d6 16.d5 ♘×d5 17.♘×d5 ♗×g3 18.h×g3 e×d5 19.♗×d5 ♕f6 20.♕a4 ♖fd8 21.♖cd1 ♖d7 (D)



22.♕g4! ♖cd8?

Equally bad was 22...♖e7? 23.♖×e7! ♕×e7 24.♗×f7+! ♕×f7 25.♖d7 h5 26.♕h3+– or 22...♖dc7 23.b4!± or finally 22...♖dd8 23.b4!±. But Black could have achieved a perfectly playable position with 22...♖d6! 23.♗e4 (23.♖e4 ♖f8! 24.♖f4 ♕d8 25.♕h5 ♘e5!) 23...♖cd8 24.♖×d6 ♖×d6 25.b4 ♖e6!=.

23.♕×d7!

The usual pattern. The queen is sacrificed in order to open the road to the back rank to win material by taking advantage of the opponent's king's placement.

23...♖×d7 24.♖e8+ ♔h7 25.♗e4+ 1-0

Black resigned as he is losing too much material after 25...g6 26.♖×d7 ♗a6 27.♗×c6.

Conclusion

A king in a cage is like a bird without a brilliant future... But of course this is a very definite combination motif which we should keep in our mind and either try to repeat, or avoid!

The Useless Isolani

Concept

A pawn is considered isolated when there are no pawns of the same color on the neighboring files. Thus, it has been detached from the rest of its camp's pawn structure and can be supported only by pieces. One very sensitive issue that both sides must attend to with great care is the matter of piece exchanges. The question to be asked is: which piece exchange is favorable for each side, and consequently undesirable for the other?

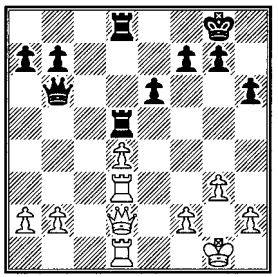
In general, the possessor of the isolated pawn should avoid unnecessary piece exchanges without gaining anything substantial in return. If he must accede to some exchange and has a choice, then it is best to avoid exchanges of the minor pieces (bishops and knights) and prefer those of the major pieces (queens and rooks). In an endgame with minor pieces, the chances of survival are especially high, while in a major-piece ending these chances are virtually nil. This survey focuses on what happens when the side with the isolated pawn has wrongly exchanged important minor pieces, thus minimizing chances for active play. Then the important strategic theme of the useless isolani becomes a reality!

Our first example is an excellent lesson on how to profit from such a pawn's negative factors:

(86) Kortschnoi – Karpov
Merano 1981
Queen's Gambit Declined [D53]

1.c4 e6 2.♘c3 d5 3.d4 ♗e7 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4 0-0 7.♖c1 d×c4 8.e3 c5 9.♗×c4 c×d4 10.e×d4 ♘c6 11.0-0 ♘h5 12.♗×e7 ♘×e7 13.♗b3 ♘f6 14.♘e5 ♗d7 15.♕e2 ♖c8 16.♘e4 ♘×e4 17.♕×e4 ♗c6 18.♘×c6 ♖×c6 19.♖c3 ♕d6 20.g3 ♖d8 21.♖d1 ♖b6 22.♕e1 ♕d7 23.♖cd3 ♖d6

24.♕e4 ♕c6 25.♕f4 ♘d5 26.♕d2 ♕b6 27.♗×d5 ♖×d5 (D)



White did not handle the position's requirements properly, as he exchanged all the minor pieces without benefiting thereby. As a result, he has been saddled with a useless isolani and arduous defense in a worse position. Black has a clear plan: triple his heavy pieces along the d-file (e.g., ...♖8d7, ...♕d8) and then proceed with an eventual ...e5, winning the white d4-pawn.

28.♖b3 ♕c6 29.♕c3 ♕d7

The rush with 29...e5? 30.♕×c6 b×c6 31.♖c1 e×d4 32.♖×c6 d3 33.Rc1 would reduce Black's advantage to the minimum.

30.f4

The only way to avoid losing the d4-pawn. But now the white king is further weakened. Although Black can continue with a direct plan involving ...f6 and ...e5 he decided to focus on the opponent's king.

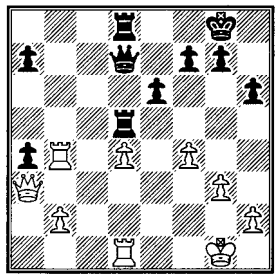
30...b6

30...b5?! 31.♖a3! creates some counterplay and of course should be avoided!

31.♖b4 b5!

Threatening 32...a5!.

32.a4 b×a4 33.♕a3 (D)

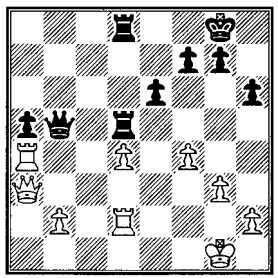


No help is 33.♕c4 ♖a5 34.♕d3 ♖c8 35.♖d2 ♕d6 36.♖c4 ♖×c4 37.♕×c4 a3 38.b×a3 ♖×a3. Now Black executed the final phase of his instructive plan:

33...a5! 34.♖×a4 ♕b5!

Black's pieces become extremely active (compare them to the passive and less than harmoniously placed White's pieces) and they are ready to penetrate into White's camp.

35.♖d2 (D)



35...e5!

Black no longer is interested in the d4-isolani; the white king is the main target.

36.f×e5 ♖×e5

Threatening 37...♖e1+.

37.♕a1

The alternatives are equally difficult for White:

(a) 37.♖f2 ♖e1+ 38.♔g2 ♕c6+ 39.d5! ♖×d5! (39...♕×d5+ 40.♕f3∓) 40.♕f3 ♕e6 41.b4 ♖e3 42.♕f4 ♖h5 43.h4 g5 44.♕f6 ♕e4+ 45.♖f3 ♖×f3 46.♕×f3 ♕c2+ 47.♔g1 ♕×a4 48.♕×h5 a×b4−+;

(b) 37.d×e5 ♖×d2 38.♖×a5 ♕e2−+.

37...♕e8!

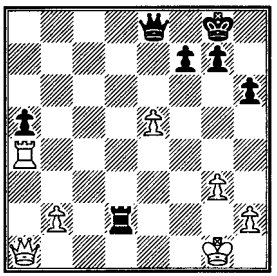
Forcing White's hand, as the threat

38...♖e1+ remains deadly.

38.d×e5

38.♔f2 ♖f5+−+; 38.♖d1 ♖e2 39.♖a3 ♕e4−+.

38...♖×d2 (D)



39.♖×a5

There are no chances left for White: 39.♕e1 ♕d7 (39...♕d8 40.♖a1 ♕d4+ 41.♔f1 ♕d5−+) 40.e6 f×e6 41.♖a1 ♕d4+; 39.♖f4 ♕×e5−+.

39...♕c6 40.♖a8+

40.♕f1 ♕b6+−+.

40...♔h7 41.♕b1+ g6

41...♖c2 is equally good: 42.♕f1 ♖c1.

42.♕f1 ♕c5+

Black did not fall for the "cheap" trap 42...♕×a8?? 43.♕×f7+=.

43.♔h1 ♕d5+ 0-1

White resigned as the coming 44...♖d1 is decisive.

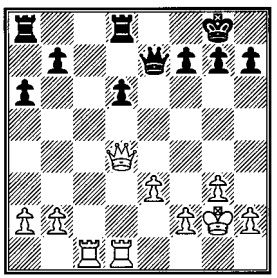
When the isolated pawn is not that far advanced, then the defense might be easier. Although this pawn can mostly be regarded as a backward and weak one, it seems that there are more saving possibilities. The following two examples are quite instructive:

(87) Grivas – Pekarek

Bucharest 1984

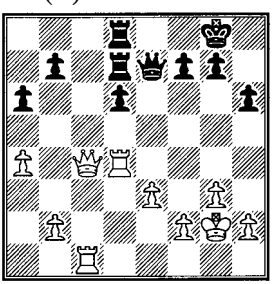
Bogo-Indian Defense [E11]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♗b4+ 4.♗d2 ♕e7 5.g3 ♘c6 6.♘c3 d6 7.♗g2 e5 8.♘d5 ♗×d2+ 9.♕×d2 ♘×d5 10.c×d5 ♘×d4 11.♘×d4 e×d4 12.♕×d4 0-0 13.e3 ♗d7 14.0-0 c5 15.d×c6 ♗×c6 16.♖fd1 ♖fd8 17.♖ac1 ♗×g2 18.♔×g2 a6 (D)



In the position that has arisen the most significant strategic element is Black's backward d-pawn, which is also isolated. The fact that this pawn is not on d5 (see the previous example), when we would have a classic example of exploiting the isolated pawn, but on d6 makes White's task harder, as this pawn is less exposed and the black king closer to it. White does have the advantage, but must discover the correct plan and execute it accurately to fight for victory.

19.♕c4 ♖d7 20.♖d4 ♖ad8 21.a4 h6 (D)



After 21...d5?, White knows well what he has to do, in accordance with the principles of attacking an isolated pawn.

22.a5?

A serious error, after which there seems to be no way for White to win. The correct plan for White is the tripling of the heavy pieces along the d-

file (♕d3 and ♖d1) and then the advance of the b-pawn to b6, from where it would create an invasion point for the white rooks on c7. White could then regroup his pieces with ♖c4 and ♖c1 and then ♖c7, applying terrible pressure on the b7-pawn; in this case White would have very good chances of victory. This is a typical and practically the only plan in such positions; White would then most likely win by "technical" means.

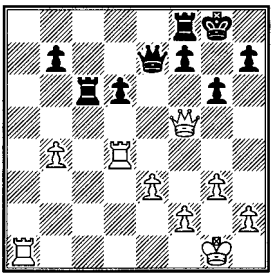
22...♕e6! 23.♖c3 ♕×c4 24.♖d×c4 ♔f8! 25.♔f3 ♖e8 26.♖b4 ♖e5 27.♖cb3 ♖×a5 28.♖×b7 ♔e7 29.♖7b6 ♖c7 30.g4 h5!

This move secures the draw in case Black loses the d6-pawn, provided that the queenside pawns are exchanged in the process. In that case, the rook ending with a 3:2 majority on the kingside will be drawn. White tried for a while.

31.h3 h×g4+ 32.h×g4 ♔d7 33.♖3b4 ♖c6 34.♖b8 ♖ac5 35.♖g8 ♖g5 36.♖f8 ♔e7 37.♖a8 f5 38.g×f5 ♖×f5+ 39.♔g3 ♔f6 40.♖g4 ♖g5 ½-½

(88) Tal – Makarichev
Tbilisi 1978
English Opening [A29]

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.g3 ♗b4 5.♘d5 ♘×d5 6.c×d5 ♘d4 7.♘×d4 e×d4 8.♕c2 ♕e7 9.♗g2 ♗a5 10.0-0 ♗b6 11.b3 d6 12.♗b2 0-0 13.e3 d×e3 14.d×e3 a5 15.a3 ♗d7 16.♖fd1 ♖ac8 17.♗d4 c5 18.d×c6 ♗×c6 19.♗×c6 ♖×c6 20.♕f5 ♗c5 21.b4 a×b4 22.a×b4 ♗×d4 23.♖×d4 g6 (D)

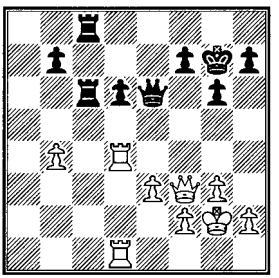


A very similar position to the previous example, but with an important difference: the black rooks are not passive. Thus Black can keep the balance.

24.♕g4

Black seems to be fine after 24.♕d3 ♖fc8 25.♖d1 ♖c3= or 24.♕f4 ♕e5=.

24...♕e6 25.♕f3 ♖fc8 26.♖ad1 ♔g7 27.♔g2 (D)



27...♖b6!

Activity is the main goal; passivity leads to disaster. Wise words that we often forget!

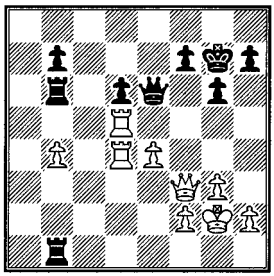
28.♖e4 ♕f6 29.♖f4 ♕e6 30.♖d5

Or 30.♖dd4 ♖b5 31.♕d1 ♖c6 32.♕d3 ♖e5=.

30...♖c1 31.♖fd4 ♖b1!

Too much activity is not always good: 31...♖a6? 32.♕f4 ♖aa1 33.♖×d6 ♖g1+ 34.♔f3 ±.

32.e4 (D)



32...♖1×b4?

A blunder. Black had to play 32...♔g8 33.♕c3 ♖c6 34.♖c5 ♕f6!=.

33.♖×b4 1-0

Black resigned in view of 33...♖×b4 34.♕c3+.

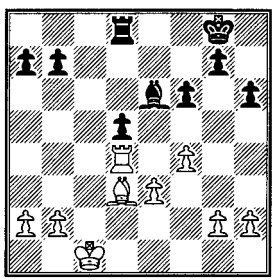
In general, endgames featuring a weak isolated pawn are a plain headache:

(89) Szabo – Penrose

Bath 1973

English Opening [A33]

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.d4 c×d4 5.♘×d4 e6 6.♘db5 ♗b4 7.♗f4 0-0 8.♗d6 ♗×d6 9.♘×d6 ♕b6 10.♕d2 ♘d4 11.♖d1 ♕×d6 12.♕×d4 ♕×d4 13.♖×d4 d5 14.c×d5 ♘×d5 15.♘×d5 e×d5 16.e3 ♗e6 17.♔d2 ♖fd8 18.♗d3 ♖ac8 19.f4 f6 20.♖c1 ♖×c1 21.♔×c1 h6 (D)



This position is very instructive. White's plan is simple and consists of two phases. During the first phase, White will maximize the potential of his pieces, bringing his king to d4 and his bishop to f3. The second phase consists of the kingside breakthrough. Black can hardly react to this plan, as the absence of an adequate number of offensive and defensive pieces leads him to passivity. This is a textbook example and constitutes perfect proof of the value of "middlegame theory." The continuation of the game fully justified White's play.

22.♔d2 ♔f8 23.♖a4

Creating some more weaknesses is always enjoyable!

23...a6 24.♖b4 ♖d7 25.♔c3 ♔e7

25...d4+? 26.♖×d4 ♖×d4 27.e×d4± ♗×a2? 28.b3 loses a piece.

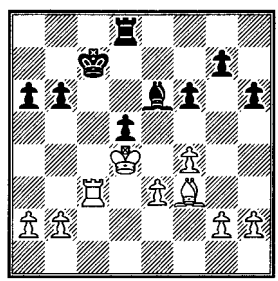
26.♔d4 ♔d8 27.♗e2!

The king has found its proper place; now it's the bishop's turn.

27...♔c7 28.♗f3 b6 29.♖b3

The rook will be needed on the kingside, so it should return.

29...♖d8 30.♖c3+ (D)



30...♔b7?

This is easily the losing move. The king belongs in the center, either to apply pressure or just to defend. White would be better after 30...♔d6 31.h3 ♖b8 32.g4± but still far from winning.

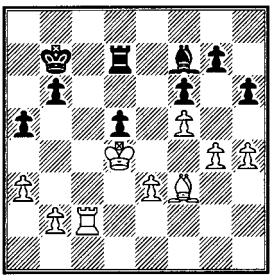
31.g4 ♖d6

If 31...g5, then 32.♖c2 ♗f7 33.h4! ♖d7 34.♖h2 and the white's rook penetration into Black's camp will be decisive.

32.a3 a5 33.h4 ♗f7 34.f5!

Creating a real target, the black g7-pawn!

34...♖d8 35.♖c2 ♖d7 (D)



35...g6 36.f×g6 ♗×g6 37.♖f2 ♔c6 38.♖f1 ♗f7 (38...♖d6 39.♖c1+ ♔d7 40.♗×d5) 39.♗g2 ♖d6 40.g5+–

36.g5!

Fulfilling the second phase.

36...f×g5

The alternative is 36...h×g5 37.h×g5 ♗g8 38.g6! (Black's bishop now is just an observer) 38...♖d6 39.♗e2! ♖d8 40.♗b5 ♖d6 41.a4 ♖d8 (41...♔b8 42.♖c6) 42.♖c6+–.

37.h×g5 h×g5 38.♖g2 ♖d6

38...♔c6 39.♖×g5 ♗e8 (39...♗g8 40.f6) 40.a4+–

39.♖×g5 g6 40.f×g6 ♖×g6 1-0

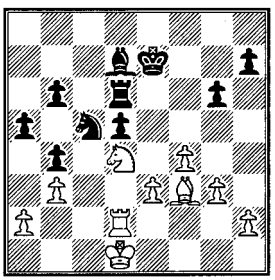
Black resigned in view of 41.♗×d5+ ♔c7 42.♖×g6 ♗×g6 43.♔e5. Finally the useless isolani fell into White's hands!

(90) Grivas – Renet

Yerevan 1996

Bogo-Indian Defense [E16]

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.d4 e6 3.c4 ♗b4+ 4.♘bd2 b6 5.g3 ♗b7 6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 d5 8.c×d5 e×d5 9.♘e5 ♗d6 10.♘dc4 ♗e7 11.♘e3 ♕c8 12.♕c2 g6 13.b3 c5 14.♗b2 ♘a6 15.♖ac1 ♕e6 16.♘d3 ♘b4 17.♘×b4 c×b4 18.♕c7 ♖ab8 19.♕e5 ♗d6 20.♕×e6 f×e6 21.♖c2 ♖bc8 22.♖fc1 ♔f7 23.♖×c8 ♗×c8 24.♖c2 ♔e7 25.f3 ♗b7 26.♘d1 ♘d7 27.♗h3 a5 28.♗c1 e5 29.♗g5+ ♔e8 30.♗e3 e×d4 31.♗×d4 ♗c5 32.♗×c5 ♘×c5 33.♖d2 ♔e7 34.♘e3 ♖d8 35.♘c2 ♗c6 36.♗g2 ♘e6 37.f4 ♘c5 38.♔f2 ♖d6 39.♔e1 ♘e6 40.♘d4 ♗d7 41.♔d1 ♘c5 42.♘c2 ♗e6 43.♗f3 ♗f7 44.♖d4 ♘a6 45.♖d2 ♘c5 46.e3 ♗e6 47.♘d4 ♗d7 (D)



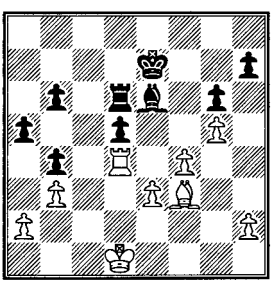
48.g4!

White sets the correct plan in motion, namely the advance of the kingside majority (3:2).

48...♘e6?!

Black hopes to pressurize White's queenside pawns with his light-square bishop, but this plan fails to materialize and therefore Black should have refrained from exchanging more pieces.

49.g5! ♘×d4 50.♖×d4 ♗e6 (D)



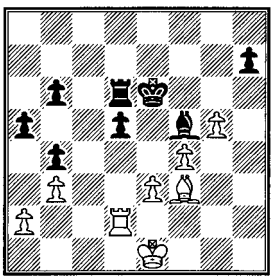
Having nailed down Black's kingside pawns, White plans the h4-h5 advance, which will either lead to an

open file for the white rook to invade or to a further weakening of Black's kingside structure. In both cases White's advantage will reach decisive proportions. Setting in motion the natural break is (as said) White's most direct and effective (if not only) continuation.

51.h4! ♖d7 52.h5 g×h5

After 52...♖d6 White can continue either by bringing his king to d4 and his rook to h2, or by the direct 53.h6! ♖d7 54.e4 d×e4 55.♖×d7+ ♔×d7 56.♗×e4 ♗g8 57.♔d2 followed by ♔d3-d4 and f5, winning easily.

53.♗×h5 ♗f5 54.♗f3 ♔e6 55.♖d2 ♖d6 56.♔e1! (D)



The last detail! White will bring his king to g3, from where it will endeavor to exchange the light-square bishops.

56...♖d7 57.♔f2 ♖d6 58.♔g3 ♔e7 59.♗g4 ♗e4 60.f5 h6!?

Attempting to set up a defense on the dark squares after 61.g6 ♔f6!.

61.♔f4! h×g5+ 62.♔×g5 ♖f6 63.♖h2!

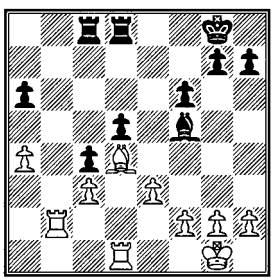
White now wins easily as the "extra" pawn on f5 is quiet powerful.

63...♖f8 64.♖h6 ♗b1 65.♖×b6 ♗×a2 66.f6+ ♖×f6 67.♖×f6 ♗×b3 68.♖b6 1-0

An isolated pawn can be a problem even if it is not directly attacked, as it can easily disrupt the defending side's plans.

(91) Grivas – Papafitsoros
Athens 2006
Queen's Gambit Declined [D32]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 c5 5.c×d5 e×d5 6.♗g5 ♗e6 7.e3 ♗e7 8.d×c5 0-0 9.♗e2 ♗×c5 10.0-0 ♘bd7 11.♖c1 ♖c8 12.♘d4 a6 13.♕b3 ♕b6 14.♕×b6 ♗×b6 15.♖fd1 ♗×d4 16.♖×d4 ♘e4 17.♗e7 ♘×c3 18.b×c3 ♖fe8 19.♗b4 ♘e5 20.♗d6 ♘c6 21.♖dd1 ♖ed8 22.♗c5 ♘e5 23.♗d4 f6 24.♖b1 b5 25.a4 ♗f5 26.♖b2 ♘c4 27.♗×c4 b×c4 (D)



In this position we notice that there are a lot of isolated pawns for both sides (a6, a4, c3 and d5). The most important factor is which side can attack them first and that is White, so he holds the advantage. Another important factor is the better placed white d4-bishop, that at the same time can attack and defend; his opponent can only defend and does not have a stable base.

28.♖b6! ♗c2!

Worse is 28...♖a8 29.a5 ♗c2 30.♖d2 ♗b3 31.f3 ♖d7 32.g4!± as White's clear plan (h4, g5 and ♖g2) can hardly be opposed by Black.

29.♖a1 ♖a8

White wins a pawn after 29...a5 30.♖b5 ♖a8 31.♗b6 ♖db8 32.♗×a5 (32.♗c7 ♖c8 33.♗×a5 ♖a7) 32...♗×a4 33.♖×d5±.

30.a5 ♖dc8

It looks like Black could put up

tougher resistance with 30...♖db8 but White can continue with 31.♖a2 ♗b3 32.♖d2 ♔f7 33.♗c5 ♖×b6 34.a×b6 ♔e6 35.e4! ±.

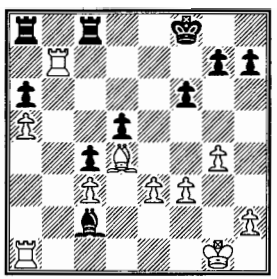
31.f3!

As White has the queenside under control, he must seek, as is normally the case, to open a second front, and that will be on the kingside.

31...♔f8 32.g4! ♔e8

32...♖cb8 33.♖a2 ♗b3 (33...♗d1?! 34.♔f2 ♔f7 35.♖d2 ♗b3 36.♗c5 ♖×b6 37.a×b6 ♔e6 38.e4 +−) 34.♖d2 ±

33.♖b7 ♔f8 (D)



34.♖a2!

White's advantage has increased, as a result of his active pieces. The one white rook controls the only open file and the second one goes to the d- or g-file, creating more threats.

34...♗b3 35.♖d2 ♗a4

35...♖cb8 36.♗c5+ ♔g8 37.♖b6 ±

36.h4 ♗c6 37.♖b6 ♗b5

37...♔f7 38.g5 f×g5 39.h×g5 ♔g6 40.♖h2 ±

38.g5 f×g5 39.h×g5 ♖ab8?!

Losing the d5-isolani pawn. More stubborn was 39...♖c6 40.♖b7 ♖g6 41.♖g2 ±.

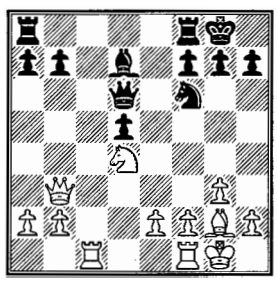
40.♗c5+ ♔f7 41.♖×d5 ♖×b6 42.♗×b6

42.a×b6! ♗c6 43.♖f5+ ♔g6 44.e4 a5 45.♖e5 +− was even better.

42...♗c6 43.♖f5+ ♔g6 44.e4 ♗d7 45.♖d5 ♗c6 46.♖e5 ♖e8 47.♖c5 ♗b5 48.♔f2 ♖e7 49.♔g3 ♖d7 50.♖e5 ♖d6 51.♗d4 ♖d7 52.f4 ♔f7 53.f5 ♖e7? 54.♖×e7+ ♔×e7 55.♗×g7 ♔f7 56.♗d4 ♗c6 57.♔f4 ♗a4 58.e5 ♗d1 59.e6+ ♔e8 60.g6! h×g6 61.f6 1-0

(92) Grivas – Hytos
Athens 2007
Slav Defense [D11]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘bd2 ♗f5 5.g3 ♘bd7 6.♗g2 ♕c7 7.0-0 e5 8.♘×e5 ♘×e5 9.d×e5 ♕×e5 10.c×d5 c×d5 11.♘f3 ♕c7 12.♘d4 ♗d7 13.♗f4 ♗d6 14.♖c1 ♕b6 15.♗×d6 ♕×d6 16.♕b3 0-0 (D)



White holds a pleasant advantage because of the weak isolated black d5-pawn and his better placed pieces. Important is also the fact that Black cannot become active, thus he cannot claim any compensation for his worse pawn structure.

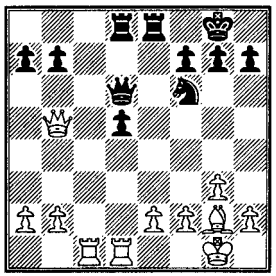
17.♖fd1

17.♕×b7? can only help Black: 17...♖fb8 18.♕c7 ♕×c7 19.♖×c7 ♖×b2 20.a3 ♗e6 ± but 17.e3 b6 18.♖c2 ± is a better try.

17...♖fe8 18.♘b5!

Although the white knight seems to be a better piece than the black bishop, the latter can defend the isolani, so it is not a bad idea at all to exchange it. When playing against the isolani, most of the time it is a good idea to exchange the minor pieces.

18...♗×b5 19.♕×b5 ♖ad8? (D)



Although Black's position is difficult, his last move loses material. He should opt for 19...♕b6 20.♕×b6 a×b6 21.♖c2 ♖×a2 22.♗×d5 ♘×d5 23.♖×d5± or 19...a6 20.♕d3 ♕e5 21.♖d2 ♖ad8 22.♖dc2±.

20.♕×b7! ♖×e2

The main alternative is 20...♖b8 21.♕×a7 ♖×b2 22.♗f3 ♕f8! 23.♖b1! ♖c2(23...♖a8 24.♕×a8 ♕×a8 25.♖×b2; 23...♖×b1 24.♖×b1 ♖a8 25.♕c7± ♖×a2?? 26.♖b8) 24.♕a4!±.

21.♗×d5!

An easy combination which wins material, the useless d5-isolani!

21...♖d7

The alternatives also lose: 21...♘×d5 22.♖×d5 ♕×d5 (22...♕f8 23.♖×d8 ♕×d8 24.♖c8) 23.♕×d5 ♖×d5 24.♖c8+; 21...♖e7 22.♗×f7+ ♔×f7 23.♖×d6 ♖×b7 24.♖×d8; 21...♔h8 22.♗b3 ♖d2 23.♖×d2 ♕×d2 24.♖d1 ♕a5 25.♖×d8+ ♕×d8 26.♕×a7.

22.♖c8+ ♖e8

22...♘e8 23.♗×f7+ ♖×f7 24.♖×e8+ ♖×e8 25.♕×f7+ ♔×f7 26.♖×d6+−

23.♖×e8+ ♘×e8 24.♕c8 ♔f8

24...♕e7 25.♗×f7+ ♕×f7 26.♖×d7

25.♗f3 1-0

Black resigned in view of 25...♕×d1+ 26.♗×d1 ♖×d1+ 27.♔g2 ♖d6 28.b4 a6 29.a4+−.

Conclusion

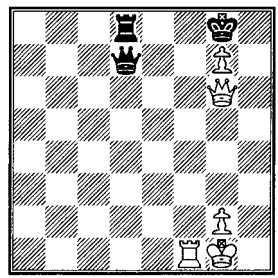
Useless isolanis should be avoided. By small tactical means the "stronger" side may exploit the disadvantages of the isolated pawn, by (usually) just grabbing it!

Driving Forces

Concept

Nowadays it is acceptable that all combinative motifs can be categorized and learned by training methods. Combinative motifs often reappear throughout the game (opening, middle- and endgame). So, a chessplayer that wishes to find his Ithaca should be trained not only in positional/strategical themes, but also in the categorized combinations that can transform his positional advantage to a material one. The combination that we will examine in this survey is a basic one to learn and one of outstanding beauty and logic. Its most simple version is represented on the following diagram:

(93) Main Position (D)



White's advantage is obvious because of his material advantage, but the win seems to be far away. The g7-pawn will be lost soon and a perpetual check threat is looming. An experienced and well-trained player can easily discover the combination that changes rapidly the evaluation of the position. The solution is simple and elegant!

1.♖f8+!

Not good is 1.♕f6? ♕d4+! (1...♕e8? 2.♕f8+ ♕×f8 3.g×f8♕+ ♖×f8 4.♖×f8+ ♔×f8 5.♔f2+–) 2.♕×d4 ♖×d4 with a drawn ending.

1...♖×f8 2.♕h7+!!

The basic idea. The black king is forced to the "ideal" square.

2...♔×h7

2...♔f7 3.g×f8♕+ or 3.g8♕+.

3.g×f8♘+ ♔g7 4.♘×d7 1-0

And White has a simple win.

It became obvious that this particular combination can be categorized according to certain factors. These factors are:

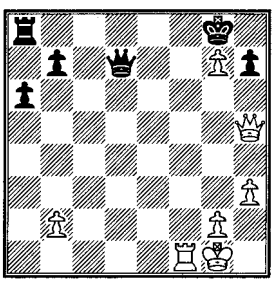
1. The knight presence/promotion which delivers the final blow.

2. The opponent's queen situated on the "ideal" square.

3. The queen (or other piece) sacrifice that drives the opponent king to its "ideal" square.

The following game, in which for the first time we see this winning method, is well-known:

(94) Labone – NN
1887 (D)

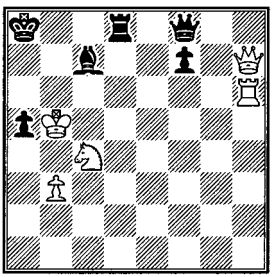


Here White "kills" his opponent:

1.♖f8+! ♖×f8 2.♕×h7+!! ♔×h7 3.g×f8♘+ ♔g7 4.♘×d7 1-0

The famous Russian composer Leonid Kubbel was probably inspired by the previous example when he created the following study (*Petrogubkommuna Chess Paper*, 1921):

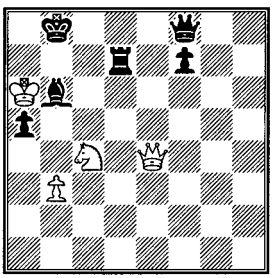
(95) Kubbel 1921 (D)



1.♕e4+ ♔b8 2.♖b6+! ♗×b6

2...♔c8 3.♕b7+ ♔d7 4.♘e5+ ♔e7 5.♕×c7+ ♔e8 6.♕c6+ ♔e7 7.♘g6+! f×g6 8.♕e6#

3.♔a6! ♖d7 (D)



If 3...♖d5, 4.♘×b6 wins. But now comes the main dish!

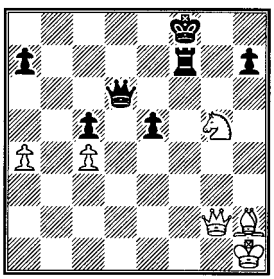
4.♕a8+!! ♔×a8 5.♘×b6+ ♔b8 6.♘×d7+ ♔c7 7.♘×f8 1-0

But is this combination one that may be encountered in great master games? Well, of course the answer is yes. Let's see a famous example:

(96) Petrosian – Simagin
Moscow 1956
King's Indian Defense [E91]

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 d6 4.d4 g6 5.e4 ♗g7 6.♗e2 0-0 7.0-0

♗g4 8.♗e3 ♘bd7 9.♘d2 ♗×e2 10.♕×e2 e5 11.d5 c5 12.♖ab1 ♘e8 13.f3 f5 14.b4 c×b4 15.♖×b4 b6 16.a4 ♗f6 17.♔h1 ♗g5 18.♗g1 ♘c7 19.♖bb1 ♘a6 20.♘b3 ♘dc5 21.♘×c5 b×c5 22.e×f5 g×f5 23.g4 f×g4 24.♘e4 ♗f4 25.♖b7 ♘c7 26.f×g4 ♘e8 27.g5 ♕c8 28.♖e7 ♕h3 29.♖f3 ♕g4 30.♕d3 ♗×h2 31.♖×f8+ ♔×f8 32.♖×e8+ ♖×e8 33.♗×h2 ♖e7 34.♘×d6 ♕×g5 35.♕f1+ ♔g8 36.♘e4 ♕h4 37.♕e2 ♖g7 38.d6 ♕h6 39.♕d1 ♕h4 40.♕e2 ♕h6 41.♕f1 ♖f7 42.♕g2+ ♔f8 43.♘g5 ♕×d6 (D)



44.♕a8+!

White cannot win material with 44.♘×f7? as Black can continue 44...♕d1+ 45.♗g1 ♕h5+ 46.♕h2 ♕f3+ with a draw by perpetual check.

44...♔g7 45.♗×e5+!!

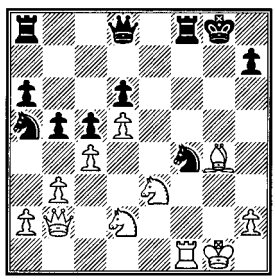
Driving the opponent queen to the "ideal" square!

45...♕×e5 46.♕h8+!! ♔×h8 47.♘×f7+ 1-0

Ten years later, Tigran Petrosian was able to repeat this combination in his 1966 title match against none other than Boris Spassky:

(97) Petrosian – Spassky
Moscow 1966
King's Indian Defense [E66]

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.g3 g6 3.c4 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.0-0 ♘c6 6.♘c3 d6 7.d4 a6 8.d5 ♘a5 9.♘d2 c5 10.♕c2 e5 11.b3 ♘g4 12.e4 f5 13.e×f5 g×f5 14.♘d1 b5 15.f3 e4! 16.♗b2 e×f3 17.♗×f3 ♗×b2 18.♕×b2 ♘e5 19.♗e2 f4 20.g×f4 ♗h3 21.♘e3 ♗×f1 22.♖×f1 ♘g6 23.♗g4 ♘×f4 (D)



24.♖×f4! ♖×f4 25.♗e6+ ♖f7

Alternatives fail to impress: 25...♔f8 26.♕h8+ ♔e7 27.♕×h7+ ♔e8 (27...♔f6 28.♕f7+ ♔e5 29.♕g7+ ♕f6 30.♕g3 ♕f8 31.♘g4+ ♔d4 32.♕e3#) 28.♕h5+ ♔f8 29.♕h6+.

26.♘e4 ♕h4

26...♖aa7 27.♘f5 ♕f8 28.♕f6+- as the coming ♘h6+ is hard to meet.

27.♘×d6 ♕g5+

27...♕e1+ 28.♔g2 ♕×e3 29.♗×f7+ ♔f8 30.♕h8+ ♔e7 31.♘f5+ ♔×f7 32.♕g7+ a↕d 33.♘×e3+- or 27...♖aa7 28.♘ef5 ♕g4+ 29.♔f2 ♕h4+ 30.♔f1 ♕d4 31.♕×d4 c×d4 32.c5 is a lost case anyway.

28.♔h1 ♖aa7

28...♕×e3 29.♗×f7+ ♔f8 30.♕h8+ ♔e7 31.♘f5+ ♔×f7 32.♕g7+ and 33.♘×e3.

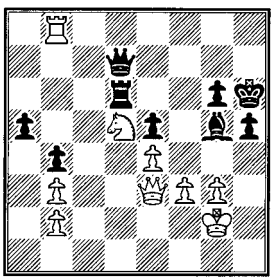
29.♗×f7+ ♖×f7 30.♕h8+! 1-0

Black resigned as 30...♔×h8 31.♘×f7+ ♔g7 32.♘×g5 is too much for him!

Even a player of Anand's caliber has fallen victim to this "procedure":

(98) J.Polgar – Anand
Wijk aan Zee 1998
Sicilian Defense [B90]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 e5 7.♘f3 ♗e7 8.♗c4 0-0 9.0-0 ♗e6 10.♕e2 b5 11.♗b3 ♗×b3 12.a×b3 ♘bd7 13.♖fd1 ♕c7 14.♗g5 ♖fc8 15.♘e1 ♕b7 16.♗×f6 ♘×f6 17.♘d5 ♘×d5 18.♖×d5 ♖c5 19.♖ad1 ♖×d5 20.♖×d5 ♖c8 21.c3 b4 22.c4 g6 23.g3 ♖c5 24.♖d1 a5 25.♘c2 ♔g7 26.♕d3 ♖c6 27.♘e3 ♕c8 28.♔g2 ♕e6 29.♕e2 ♗d8 30.♘d5 ♖c5 31.♕e3 ♗e7 32.♖d3 ♗d8 33.♕d2 ♖c6 34.♕d1 ♔g8 35.h4 ♔g7 36.h5 ♗g5 37.♕f3 ♖c8 38.♖d1 ♖c6 39.♕e2 ♖c8 40.♖h1 ♔g8 41.f3 ♖b8 42.♕f2 ♖b7 43.h×g6 f×g6 44.c5 d×c5 45.♕×c5 ♗d8 46.♖c1 ♔f7 47.♕e3 ♔g7 48.♖c4 ♖d7 49.♕c1 h5 50.♖c6 ♖d6 51.♖c8 ♕d7 52.♕c5 ♔h6 53.♖b8 ♗f6 54.♕e3+ ♗g5 (D)



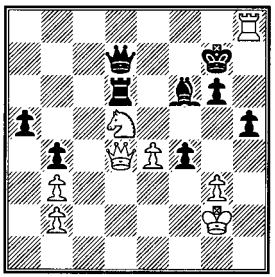
White's position is obviously much better, as a result of the strong d5-knight and the weak black king. So, it's not so strange that a winning combination exists.

55.f4! e×f4?

Black had to try 55...♗×f4 although he would not have many chances to survive after 56.g×f4 ♕g4+ 57.♕g3 ♕e2+ 58.♔h3 ♕f1+ 59.♕g2 ♕×g2+ 60.♔×g2 e×f4 61.♖h8+ ♔g7 62.♖a8.

56.♖h8+! 1-0

And Black resigned as he saw the coming combination after the forced 56...♔g7 57.♕d4+ ♗f6 (D)

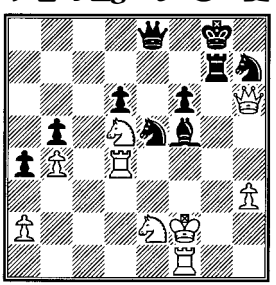


58.♕×f6+!! ♖×f6 59.♖h7+ ♔×h7 60.♘×f6+ ♔g7 61.♘×d7.

The side with the advantage can use this combination to force a winning endgame:

(99) Grivas – Banikas
Korinthos 1997
King's Indian defense [E69]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.0-0 d6 6.c4 ♘bd7 7.♘c3 e5 8.h3 c6 9.e4 ♖e8 10.♖b1 a5 11.b3 e×d4 12.♘×d4 ♘c5 13.♖e1 a4 14.b4 ♘e6 15.♘de2 h6 16.f4 g5 17.♗e3 g×f4 18.g×f4 ♘f8 19.♕d2 ♘g6 20.f5 ♘e5 21.♗×h6 ♗×h6 22.♕×h6 ♘h7 23.♖ed1 ♘×c4 24.♖d4 b5 25.e5 ♘×e5 26.♖f1 f6 27.♗×c6 ♖a7 28.♗×e8 ♕×e8 29.♘d5 ♖g7+ 30.♔f2 ♗×f5 (D)



31.♕×h7+!!

The white queen sacrifice is simple and obvious, but still gives much plea-

sure, as Black can accepted it with three different pieces, but none guarantees his survival.

31...♖×h7 32.♘×f6+ ♔f7 33.♘×e8 ♔×e8 34.♖×d6 ♗×h3 35.♖h1 ♖f7+ 36.♔e1 ♗g2 37.♖h8+ ♔e7 38.♖a6 ♘d3+ 39.♔d2 ♘×b4 40.♖a7+ ♔f6 41.♖h6+ ♔g7 42.♖×f7+ ♔×f7

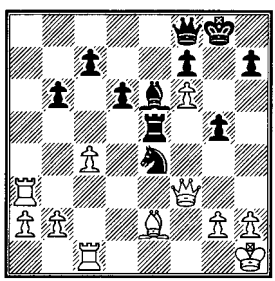
42...♔×h6 43.♘c3 ♗c6 44.♖a7 ♔g5 45.♖a5 ♔f4 46.a3

43.♘c3 a3 44.♖h4! 1-0

The next example does not feature a queen sacrifice, but it is still instructive:

(100) Skembris – Grivas
Khania 1987
Budapest Gambit [A52]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.d×e5 ♘g4 4.♘f3 ♗c5 5.e3 ♘c6 6.♗e2 ♘g×e5 7.♘c3 0-0 8.♘×e5 ♘×e5 9.0-0 ♖e8 10.♔h1 a5 11.f4 ♘g6 12.e4 ♗b4 13.f5 ♘e5 14.♘d5 ♗f8 15.f6 g6 16.♗g5 d6 17.♕d2 ♗e6 18.♗h6 ♔h8 19.♗×f8 ♖×f8 20.♕h6 ♖g8 21.♘e7 b6 22.♖ac1 ♕f8 23.♘×g8 ♔×g8 24.♕h4 a4 25.♖c3 ♖a5 26.♖fc1 ♘d7 27.♖a3 g5 28.♕f2 ♖e5 29.♖×a4 ♘c5 30.♖a3 ♘×e4 31.♕f3 (D)



Black can win by simply repeating our main idea; driving the white queen to the "ideal" square:

31...♗g4! 32.♕×g4

There was no decent alternative: 32.♕e3 ♗×e2 33.♕×e2 ♘g3+.

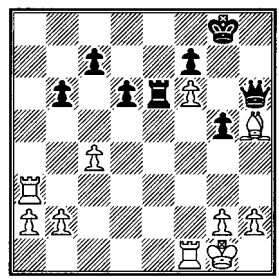
32...♘f2+ 33.♔g1 ♘×g4 34.♗×g4 h5

34...♕e8 is much stronger.

35.♗×h5 ♖e6?!

Again Black should get back on the right track with 35...♕e8 36.♖f1 ♖e1 37.♖af3 ♕e5.

36.♖f1 ♕h6? (D)



36...d5 37.c×d5 ♕c5+ 38.♔h1 ♖×f6 39.♖af3 ♖×f3 40.♗×f3 ♕c4 was still winning.

37.♖h3! ♕f8 38.♗g4! ♖e4 39.♗f5 ♖f4 40.♗h7+

After his 'adventure' White is now satisfied with the draw. He could try 40.♖e3 ♕a8 (40...♖×f1+? 41.♔×f1 ♕d8 42.♖e7±) 41.♖fe1 ♖×f5 42.♖e8+ ♕×e8 43.♖×e8+ ♔h7 44.♖e7 ♖c5 45.♖×f7+ ♔g6 46.♖d7 ♖×c4 47.f7 ♔g7 although Black holds the draw without serious difficulties.

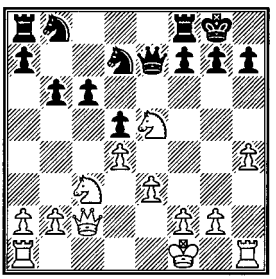
40...♔h8 41.♖×f4 g×f4 42.♗e4+ ♔g8 43.♗h7+ ♔h8 44.♗f5+ ½-½

We will conclude this survey with a very nice example, where both sides performed our motif:

(101) Ilandzis – Ivanov,I.
Burgas 1987
Queen's Gambit Declined [D55]

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 e6 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.♗g5 0-0 6.e3 b6

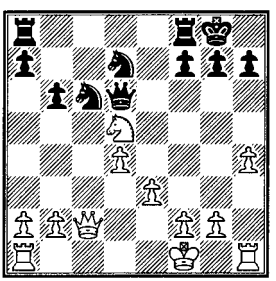
7.♕c2 ♗a6 8.c×d5 ♗×f1 9.♔×f1 e×d5 10.♘e5 c6 11.h4 ♘fd7 12.♗×e7 ♕×e7 (D)



13.♘×c6!

The prelude to the upcoming main combination.

13...♘×c6 14.♘×d5 ♕d6 (D)



15.♕×c6!

An easy but effective follow-up which started with White's 13th move. Now he gets a winning position.

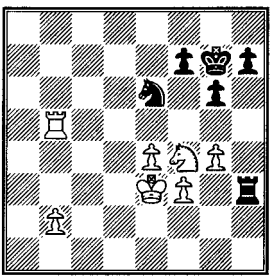
15...♕×c6 16.♘e7+ ♔h8 17.♘×c6 ♖fc8 18.♖c1 ♖c7 19.♔e2 ♖ac8 20.d5 g6

20...♘e5 21.♘×e5 ♖×c1 22.♖×c1 ♖×c1 23.d6+−

21.♔d2?

21.♖c4+−

21...♘f6 22.f3 ♘×d5 23.♘×a7 ♖a8 24.♖×c7 ♘×c7 25.♘c6 ♖×a2 26.♖b1 +/- ♔g7 27.e4 ♘e6 28.♔e3 ♘c5 29.♘b4 ♖a7 30.♘d5 b5 31.♖c1 ♘e6 32.g4 ♖a2 33.♖c2 ♖a1 34.♖c3 ♖h1 35.♖b3 ♖×h4 36.♖×b5 ♖h3 37.♘f4? (D)

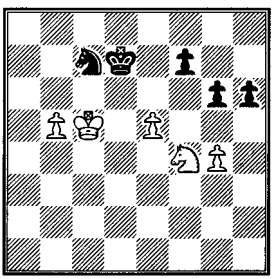


A blunder. White had to try 37.♘c3±.

37...♖×f3+!

The usual method!

38.♔×f3 ♘d4+ 39.♔e3 ♘×b5 40.e5 h6 41.♔d3 ♘c7 42.♔c4 ♔f8 43.b4 ♔e7 44.b5 ♔d7 45.♔c5 (D)



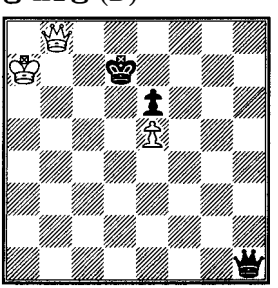
45...♘e6+?

Returning the favor. Black could draw with 45...h5 46.g×h5 g×h5 47.♔b6 (47.♘×h5 ♘×b5) 47...♘×b5 48.♔×b5 h4 49.♔c4 h3 50.♘×h3 f6!=.

46.♘×e6 f×e6

46...♔×e6 47.♔c6 ♔×e5 48.b6 +-

47.♔b6 h5 48.g×h5 g×h5 49.♔a7 h4 50.b6 h3 51.b7 h2 52.b8♕ h1♕ (D)



53.♕b7+!

Achieving a winning pawn ending. The rest was simple:

53...♕×b7+ 54.♔×b7 ♔e7 55.♔c7 ♔f7 56.♔d7 ♔f8 57.♔×e6 ♔e8 58.♔d6 1-0

Conclusion

As is the case with all combinational themes, this one can be taught and learned. It occurs quite often compared to similar combinations and it is easy to formulate and execute. But it still must be admitted that it is extremely beautiful!

Emptying the Queenside

Concept

A queenside without pawns (along with the central pawns) is rarely met and even more rarely noticed. In my opinion, this happens because chessplayers tend to think (for the most part) that there are not enough satisfactory chances to achieve anything more than a draw, as the limited number of pawns remaining will, most of the time, help the weaker side. Well, this is a completely wrong attitude for a chessplayer's way of thinking. Although it cannot be argued that there is some fair amount of truth behind this thinking, we must keep in mind that every position is unique and on the chessboard both pawns and other, stronger pieces exist! Actually a board without central and queenside (or central and kingside) pawns, but full of other pieces, is a hard nut to crack.

There exist many more open files and diagonals, giving the minor and major pieces more room to act and eventually there might be a real tactical battle looking for a place to happen.

The "weaker" side should opt for the following:

(1) Exchange some pieces. Then there is normally no problem holding the draw.

(2) If under pressure, think to exchange some pieces, even at the cost of a pawn. Then by opting for an ending with 3:4 or 2:3 pawns on the same flank he gets fair chances to hold the draw.

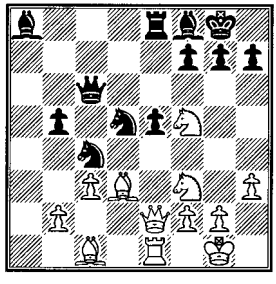
But then the question arises: Which ending is the most "acceptable" for the defending side? Here comes the "value" table (one piece for each side):

(1) Bishops
(2) Rooks
(3) Queens
(4) Knights

In our first example things went easily for both sides, leading to a normal result.

(102) Timman – Spassky
Montreal 1979
Ruy Lopez [C91]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.d4 ♗g4 10.d5 ♘a5 11.♗c2 c6 12.h3 ♗c8 13.d×c6 ♕c7 14.♘bd2 ♕×c6 15.♘f1 ♘c4 16.♘g3 ♖e8 17.a4 ♗b7 18.♗d3 ♗f8 19.♕e2 d5 20.a×b5 a×b5 21.♖×a8 ♗×a8 22.e×d5 ♘×d5 23.♘f5 (D)



White seems to stand slightly better...

23...e4!

With this neat combination, Black succeeds in exchanging most of the pieces plus the queenside pawns, getting nearer to the draw.

24.♗×e4 ♘×c3 25.b×c3

25.♗×c6 ♖×e2 26.♗×a8 ♖×e1+ 27.♘×e1 ♘e2+ 28.♔f1 ♘×c1 is preferable for Black.

25...♖×e4 26.♕×e4 ♕×e4 27.♖×e4 ♗×e4 28.♘5d4 b4

28...♘d6 29.♗a3

29.♘d2!

Securing the draw.

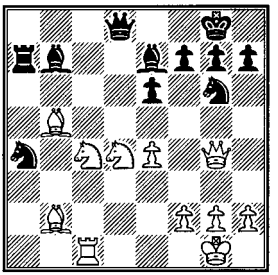
29...♘×d2 30.♗×d2 b×c3 31.♗×c3 ½-½

The central and queenside pawns are gone. What is also important is that most of the pieces are exchanged and the remaining minor pieces cannot create any threats. So, a draw is the natural outcome.

(103) Kramnik – Kasparov
Moscow 2001
Queen's Gambit Accepted [D27]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 d×c4 3.♘f3 e6 4.e3 a6 5.♗×c4 c5 6.0-0 ♘f6 7.♗d3 b6 8.d×c5 ♗×c5 9.a3 ♗b7 10.♕e2 0-0 11.♘bd2 ♘bd7 12.b4 ♗e7 13.♗b2 a5 14.b×a5 ♖×a5 15.♗b5 ♕b8 16.a4 ♖c8 17.♖fc1 ♖a7 18.♖×c8+ ♕×c8 19.♖c1 ♕a8 20.♘d4 ♘c5 21.♘c4 ♘d5 22.e4 ♘f4 23.♕g4 ♘g6 24.♘×b6 ♕d8 25.♘c4 ♘×a4 (D)

Our second example is quite instructive. Of course, there are no queenside pawns, but on the other hand this is not an important factor, as only a pair of rooks have been exchanged.



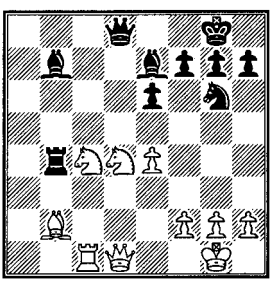
26.♗×a4?

Wrong! White could and should have played 26.♘×e6! when Black would have had to go on with 26...♕c8! (26...f×e6? is weak: 27.♘e5! ♘×e5 [27...♕d6 28.♘×g6 h×g6 29.♗×a4 ♖×a4 30.♕×g6 ♗f8 31.♗×g7 ♗×g7 32.♕e8+ ±] 28.♗×e5 ♗f6 29.♖c7 ♔h8 30.♖d7 ♕×d7 [30...♕g8 31.♗×f6 g×f6 32.♕f4 ♕f8 33.♕c7+−] 31.♗×d7 ♘c5 32.♕h5 ♖a8 33.♗b5±) 27.♘b6! (27.♗×a4? ♖×a4 28.♘b6 ♕×c1+ 29.♗×c1 ♖a1 30.g3 ♖×c1+ 31.♔g2 ♖c6∓) 27...♕×e6 (27...♘×b6? 28.♖×c8+ ♗×c8 29.♕d1! ♗×e6 30.♕d4+−) 28.♕×e6 f×e6 29.♘×a4 ♗×e4 achieving a drawn endgame.

26...♖×a4 27.♕d1

No better were the other options: 27.♕f3 ♖×c4! 28.♖×c4 ♘e5 29.♕b3 ♘×c4 30.♕×c4 ♗×e4 -/+ and 27.♕e2 ♗g5 28.♖d1 ♕c7∓.

27...♖b4! (D)



28.♗a3?

Although not pleasant, White should have entered a worse position minus a pawn: 28.♕c2 ♗g5 29.♖b1 ♗×e4 30.♕×e4 ♖×c4. Then his main object should be to transpose to a drawing ending with 3:4 pawns on the same wing, as has been already described.

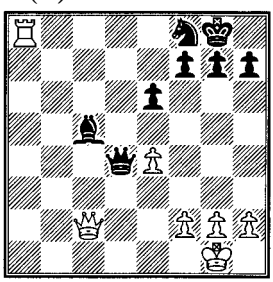
28...♖×c4!

Black wins material (two pieces for a rook).

29.♖×c4 ♗×a3 30.♕b3 ♗a6! 31.♖a4 ♗c5 32.♖×a6

What else? If 32.♘×e6, then 32...♕d2! wins on the spot.

32...♕×d4 33.♖a8+ ♘f8 34.♕c2 (D)



Two pieces vs. rook with four pawns for each side on the same flank and a healthy pawn structure, are nearly always a win for the pieces. The first step for Black is to activate all his pieces.

34...g6 35.g3 ♔g7 36.♔g2

36.♖c8 ♕a1+! 37.♔g2 ♗d4 38.♖c7 ♕e1 39.♖b7 e5−+ as the black knight comes to the excellent e6-square.

36...e5 37.♖a4 ♕d6 38.♕c4 ♘e6 39.♕d5 ♕b8! 40.♖a8 ♕b2 41.♖a2 ♕c3 42.♕d2 ♕b3 43.♕d5 ♕b8 44.♖a8 ♕c7!

After repeating some moves, testing White, Black returns to the right path.

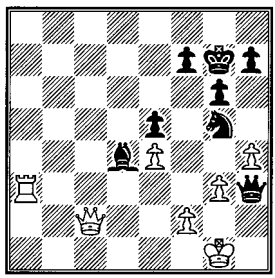
45.♖a6 ♗d4 46.♕c6 ♕e7 47.♖a8

47.♕c2 ♕g5 -+

47...♕f6 48.♕c2 ♘g5 49.♖a3

49.♕e2 ♕c6 -+

49...♕e6 50.h4 ♕h3+ 51.♔g1 (D)



51...♘e6

Black is attacking the white king with three pieces; White is defending with two. Obviously, Black must be on a certain path to victory. The rest of the game was not that difficult:

52.♖b3

Or 52.♕e2 ♘f4 53.♕f3 ♘h5 54.♖b3 ♘f6 55.♖b7 ♕e6 56.♖c7 ♕a2 57.♔g2 ♘g4!−+.

52...♕g4 53.♕d3?!

This loses quicker, but even with the best 53.♔h2 White would be much happier, as after 53...♘c5 54.f3 ♕h5 (54...♕d7 55.♖a3 ♕b7−+) 55.♖a3 g5 56.♕g2 g4−+ the e4-pawn is lost.

53...♘c5 54.♕f3 ♕×f3 55.♖×f3 ♘×e4 0-1

And White decided that he had enough and resigned.

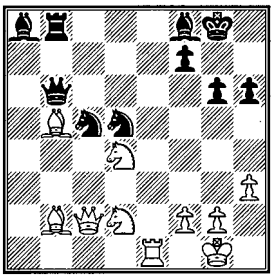
(104) Timman – Kasparov

Hilversum 1985

Ruy Lopez [C93]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♗b7 10.d4 ♖e8 11.♘bd2 ♗f8 12.a3 h6 13.♗c2 ♘b8 14.b4 ♘bd7 15.♗b2 g6 16.c4 e×d4 17.c×b5 a×b5 18.♘×d4 c6 19.a4 b×a4 20.♗×a4 ♕b6 21.b5 c×b5 22.♗×b5 d5

23.♖×a8 ♗×a8 24.♕a4 ♘c5 25.♕c2 ♖b8 26.e×d5 ♘×d5 (D)

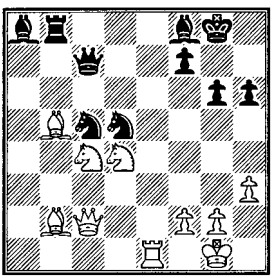


The only difference with the previous example is the absence of the e-pawns. This means that even if either side loses a pawn, by exchanging all the pieces (but one!) he can be guaranteed of a draw.

27.♘c4?!

Too ambitious. White should focus on defense with 27.♗a1 ♘f4 28.♗f1=.

27...♕c7 (D)



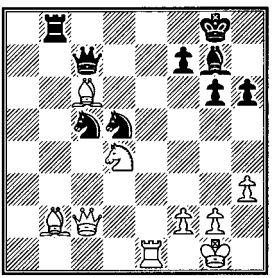
28.♘e5?!

A second inaccuracy in a short time. White should have played 28.♖e8! ♖×e8 29.♗×e8♕e7 (29...♘b4? 30.♕c3! ♗g7 31.♕×b4 ♘d3 32.♕a3 ♘×b2 33.♗×f7+ ♔×f7 34.♘d6+ ♔g8 35.♕×a8+ ♔h7 36.♕c6±; 29...♗g7? 30.♘b5! ♕e7 31.♘bd6±; 29...♘f4 30.♘e3 ♗e4 31.♕c4 ♕e7 32.♗a3=) 30.♕e2 ♕×e2 31.♘×e2 ♘c7 32.♘b6 ♗b7 33.♗d7 and he will be able to hold the draw.

28...♗g7 29.♘ec6?!

White has lost his way. Also wrong would be 29.♗c6? ♗×e5 30.♕×c5 (30.♗×a8 ♘b4 31.♕e2 ♘bd3−+) 30...♖×b2 31.♕×d5 ♗×d4 32.♖e8+ ♔h7 33.♕×d4 ♖b1+−+ but White had to accept a worse position with 29.♘ef3 ♘f4 30.♗a3 ♘×g2 31.♖e8+ ♖×e8 32.♗×e8 ♘e6∓.

29...♗×c6 30.♗×c6 (D)



30.♘×c6 ♖×b5 31.♗×g7 ♔×g7−+

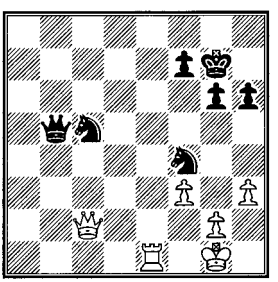
30...♘f4! 31.♗b5

Also not encouraging was 31.♖e8+? ♖×e8 32.♗×e8 ♘ce6 33.♕×c7 ♘×c7 34.♗c6 ♗×d4 35.♗×d4 ♘e2+−+ or 31.♕×c5 ♖×b2 32.♘b5 ♘e2+! 33.♔h1 (33.♖×e2 ♖b1+) 33...♕a5 34.♖f1 ♘d4−+.

31...♖×b5?

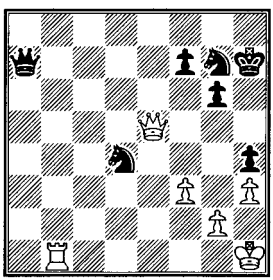
Black's position is so good that he can even afford mistakes! With 31...♘ce6! 32.♕×c7 (32.♕e4 ♗×d4 33.♗×d4 ♖×b5) 32...♘×c7 he could win on the spot.

32.♘×b5 ♕c6 33.f3 ♕×b5 34.♗×g7 ♔×g7 (D)



Black has again won two pieces for a rook, but he still must work for his bacon! As in the previous example, he should create an attack against the white king, as a potential queen exchange would definitely increase White's chances for survival.

35.♕c3+ ♔g8 36.♕e5 ♘fe6 37.♖a1 ♕b7 38.♕d6 h5 39.♔h1 ♔h7 40.♖c1 ♕a7 41.♖b1 ♘g7 42.♖b8 ♘ce6 43.♕e5 ♘d4 44.♖b1 h4! (D)



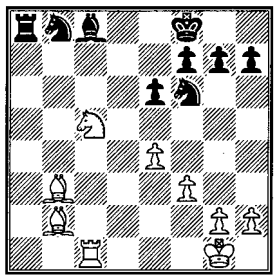
The black knights are ready to occupy excellent positions and, in harmony with their queen, to deliver the final blow to the white king.

45.♕b8 ♕e7 46.♕b4 ♕f6 47.♕f8 ♘e2 48.♖d1 ♘f5 49.♕b8 ♘e3 50.♕d8 ♕f4 51.♖e1 ♘f1 0-1

51...♘f5 led to a forced mate: 52.♖×e2 ♘g3+ 53.♔g1 ♕c1+ but the text move is also good, forcing White to resign as after 52.♖×f1 ♘g3+ 53.♔g1 ♕e3+ the end is near.

(105) Kramnik – Karpov
Dos Hermanas 1997
Nimzo-Indian Defense [E32]

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 0-0 5.a3 ♗×c3 6.♕×c3 b6 7.b4 ♗b7 8.♗b2 d6 9.e3 ♘bd7 10.d4 ♘e4 11.♕b3 a5 12.♗e2 a×b4 13.a×b4 ♖×a1+ 14.♗×a1 ♘df6 15.0-0 ♕d7 16.♗b2 ♖a8 17.b5 c6 18.b×c6 ♕×c6 19.♖c1 ♘d7 20.♘e1 ♕a4 21.♕×a4 ♖×a4 22.f3 ♘ef6 23.♗d1 ♖a2 24.♘d3 ♔f8 25.♗b3 ♖a8 26.e4 ♘b8 27.c5 b×c5 28.d×c5 d×c5 29.♘×c5 ♗c8 (D)



It seems that black would be able to hold his slightly inferior position. But this is easier said than done! His pieces are placed passively, while White's pieces are active and threatening. One must also add the advantage of the two bishops.

30.e5!

Gaining more space.

30...♘e8?

A fatal mistake. Black should go in for 30...♘d5! 31.♗×d5 (31.♘e4 ♗d7 32.♖d1 ♗c6 ±; 31.♖d1 ♘a6! 32.♗×d5 e×d5 33.♖×d5 ♘×c5 34.♖×c5 ♗e6=) 31...e×d5 32.♘d3 ♗f5!? (32...♘d7 33.♘b4 ±; 32...♘a6 33.♘f4 ♗b7 34.♗a3+ ♔g8 35.♗d6 ±) 33.♘f4 ♖a5 34.♗c3 ♖b5 35.♗d4 ♔e8 36.♘h5 ♔f8 37.♖c7 ♘a6 38.♖a7 where White stands better but Black has fair chances to fight for his half-point.

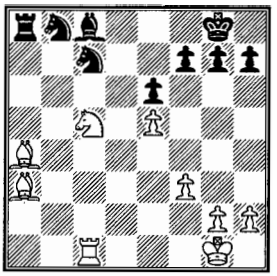
31.♗a4!

Threatening ♗a3 or ♖d1.

31...♘c7

Alternatives as 31...♔e7 32.♗a3 ♔d8 33.♖d1+ ♔c7 34.♗×e8 ♖×a3 35.♗×f7 or 31...f6 32.♗×e8 ♔×e8 33.e×f6 g×f6 34.♗×f6 do not seem to help much either.

32.♗a3 ♔g8 (D)



33.♘e4! ♖×a4

There is nothing positive for Black anymore: 33...♘ba6 34.♗d6 ♗b7 (34...♘d5 35.♗c6+−; 34...♖a7 35.♗b5! f5 36.e×f6 ♘×b5 37.♖×c8+ ♔f7 38.♖f8+ ♔g6 39.♗e5+−) 35.♗×c7 ♗×e4 (35...♖c8 36.♘d6) 36.f×e4 ♖c8 37.♗b5 ♖×c7 (37...♘×c7 38.♗d7) 38.♖d1.

34.♖×c7 ♗a6

34...♗d7 35.♗d6 (threatening ♖b7 or ♘c5) 35...♖a1+ 36.♔f2 ♖b1 37.♘c5.

35.♘c5! 1-0

Black resigned in view of 35...♖×a3 (35...♖c4 36.♘×a6) 36.♘×a6.

Conclusion

An "empty" queenside doesn't guarantee an easy draw; there is plenty of play still left, depending on the remaining pieces.

False Guards

Concept

It is of primary concern to try to keep the enemy forces away from (what we consider) important squares in order to avoid any undesirable conflicts. This action is an important part of modern strategic planning. In our efforts to control those important squares, we mostly use our pawns (and sometimes also pieces), creating small defensive spheres on the board. A problem starts when the enemy pieces occasionally ignore the power of our pawns and are bravely placed on these "prohibited" squares, as their capture leads to heavy material or positional disadvantage.

Then we have the case of a "false guard"; a pawn that cannot really do its job, the one that we had set out for it when placing it in a certain square. It is not strange that when it is proven that this pawn is a false guard, its owner's position turns usually into a nightmare. Let's see why:

(106) Ponomariov – Carlsen
Wijk aan Zee 2007
Slav Defense [D10]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e3 a6 5.♘f3 ♗f5

Most chessplayers prefer 5...b5 as in the games Radjabov-Ivanchuk, Odessa 2007 and Ivanchuk-Bacrot, Odessa 2007.

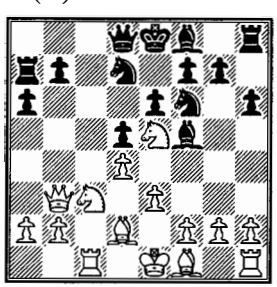
6.♘e5 h6?!

More precise is 6...♘bd7 7.♕b3 ♕c7 8.c×d5 ♘×e5 9.d×e5 ♘×d5 10.♘×d5 c×d5 11.♗d2 e6 12.♖c1 ♕d7 13.♗e2 ♗e7= Gelfand-Svidler, Monte Carlo 2006. Somewhat worse is 6...e6 as after 7.g4! ♗g6 8.h4 d×c4 9.♘×c4 h6 (9...h5!?) 10.♘e5 ♗h7 11.g5 it gives the initiative to White.

7.♕b3 ♖a7

Black had no real alternative, as after 7...b5 8.c×d5 c×d5 9.a4! his queenside would collapse.

8.c×d5 c×d5 9.♗d2 e6 10.♖c1 ♘bd7?! (D)



Good or bad, Black had to play 10...♗e7 11.♕a4+ ♔f8 12.♘b5 ♖a8 13.♘c7 ♖a7 14.♘b5 ♖a8 15.♘c7 ♖a7 16.♗a5 (16.♗b4!? is an interesting option) 16...b5 17.♘×b5!? (17.♕d1!? Kanep-Semcesen, Hallsberg 2004) 17...a×b5 18.♗×d8 ♖×a4 19.♖c8 ♗b4+! (19...♖×a2 20.♗c7+ ♘e8 21.♗×b5+−) 20.♔d1 ♔g8 21.♖×b8 ♔h7 22.a3 ♗d6 23.♖c8 ♗×e5 24.d×e5 ♘e4 25.♔e1 b4 26.♗b5 ♖a7 27.a4 ♖×d8 28.♖×d8 ♖c7 29.♖f1 ♖c1+ 30.♔e2 ♖c2+ 31.♔e1=. Of course this is just a sample variation; there are many hidden possibilities for both sides.

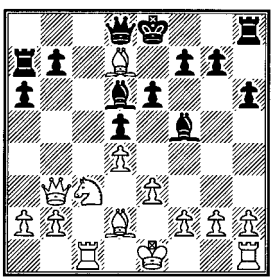
11.♗b5!

Is there a real reason for Black playing 4...a6 if he cannot keep the white pieces away from the b5-square? Well, the a6-pawn is a false guard as it has failed in its mission. Previously White had chosen 11.♘×d7? leading to an unclear position after 11...♘×d7 12.♘e2 ♘b8 13.♘f4 ♗d6 14.♗b4 ♗×b4+ 15.♕×b4 ♘c6 16.♕c5 ♖a8 17.♗d3 g5 18.♗×f5 g×f4 19.♗h3 f×e3 20.f×e3 ♕e7 21.♔e2 h5 as in the game Radjabov-Morozevich, Moscow 2002.

11...♗d6

Black cannot accept the "sacrifice": 11...a×b5? 12.♘×b5 leads to his immediate demise. A clear case of a false guard appeared on the board and it really troubles him!

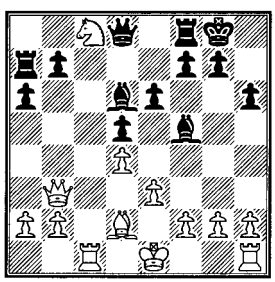
12.♘×d7 ♘×d7 13.♗×d7+ (D)



13...♕×d7?!

Black should have played 13...♔×d7! although his position is far from attractive: 14.♘e2! (14.♘a4 b5 15.♘c5+ ♔e7 16.f3 [16.a4?! ♕b8 17.a5 ♖c8 18.♗b4 ♔f8 19.♔d2 ♔g8∞ Vaganian-Frolov, Togliatti 2003] 16...♖e8 17.e4 d×e4 18.f×e4 ♗g6 19.e5 ♗×c5 20.♗b4 ♔d7 21.♗×c5 ♕h4+ 22.g3 ♕e4+ 23.♔f2 ♕f5+ 24.♕f3± ½-½ Nielsen-Hansen, Malmo 2003) 14...b5 15.0-0 ♕b8 16.♘g3 ♗g6 17.♗b4 ♖c8 18.♗c5± Laurent-Berthelot, Guingamp 2004.

14.♘a4! 0-0 15.♘b6 ♕d8 16.♘c8 (D)



White has finally exploited the clumsy position of the enemy rook on a7!

16...♕×c8

As the line 16...♖a8 17.♘×d6 ♕×d6 18.♗b4 ♕d7 19.♗×f8 is winning for White, Black decided to muddy the waters, but to no avail:

17.♖×c8 ♖×c8 18.♕b6! ♗b8 19.0-0 ♔h7 20.♖c1!

White wants to exchange Black's only active piece.

20...♗c2

After 20...♖×c1+ 21.♗×c1 Black's pieces on the queenside are doomed. The rest of the game was easy enough for White:

21.♗a5 ♔g6

Or 21...♖c6 22.♕d8 ♖a8 23.♕d7+−.

22.♕b4 ♖c4 23.♕d2 ♗f5 24.♖×c4 d×c4 25.♗b6 ♖a8 26.♕e2 e5

Or 26...♗d3 27.♕f3+−.

27.♕×c4 e×d4 28.♕×d4 f6 29.f4

Or 29.g4 ♗b1 30.♕d5.

29...♗b1 30.♕d5 1-0

Around 30 years ago, in the year 1982 (my god, I must be really old!), I played four interesting games, all connected with the theme of a "false guard."

(107) Benjamin – Grivas

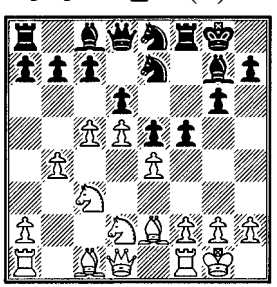
Copenhagen 1982

King's Indian Defense [E97]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0-0 6.♘f3 e5 7.0-0 ♘c6 8.d5 ♘e7 9.b4 ♘e8?!

Definitely a weak move compared to 9...a5 or 9...♘h5.

10.c5 f5 11.♘d2 (D)



11...f4?!

Keep in mind that at those times I was an inexperienced 16-year old boy, so my chess understanding was a bit low! But the well-known American grandmaster did not find the best moves, probably shocked by my 9th and 11th moves! But of course, shocking someone is not the appropriate way to play chess, at least not always!

12.♘c4?!

12.♗g4! g5 13.♘c4 ♘g6 14.♗×c8 ♖×c8 15.f3 is excellent for White. This is also possible in the next few moves.

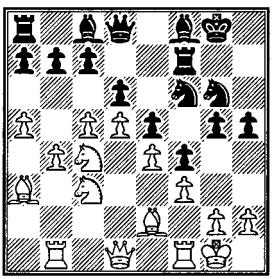
12...g5 13.a4 ♘g6 14.♗a3 ♖f7 15.a5?!

15.b5 ♗f8 16.b6 a×b6 17.c×b6 c×b6 18.♖b1 is much better for White.

15...♗f8 16.♖b1

16.a6 b6 17.c×b6 c×b6 18.b5 g4! plays into Black's hands: 19.♗×g4? ♗×g4 20.♕×g4 ♖c8.

16...♘f6 17.f3 h5 (D)

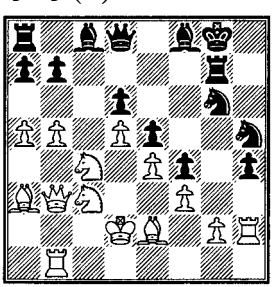


White has not succeeded in creating serious counterplay on the queenside, and has allowed Black to get a typical, dangerous attack. He now undertakes a plan not seen that often, transferring his king to the center, where it can be a bit safer.

18.♔f2!? g4 19.♔e1 ♖g7 20.c×d6 c×d6 21.♔d2 g3! 22.♖h1

22.h×g3 f×g3 23.♖h1 ♘f4 cannot be good for White, while after 22.h3 ♘h4 23.♖g1 Black plays up an exchange, as the black h4-knight keeps the white g1-rook tie to defensive duties. Then his plan would be to open the queenside and take advantage of this unusual material imbalance.

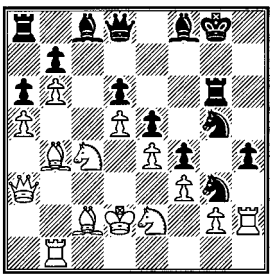
22...g×h2 23.♖×h2 h4 24.♕b3 ♘h5 25.b5 (D)



25...♘h8!

Black plans the ...h3 advance, so he needs the help of his knight from the g5-square (...♘h8-f7-g5).

26.♗b4 ♘g3 27.♗d3 ♘f7 28.♕a3 ♖g6 29.b6 a6 30.♗c2 ♘g5 31.♘e2 (D)



31...♗d7!?

Not bad, but 31...h3 32.g×h3 ♗×h3 seems stronger.

32.♘×d6

Forced, as otherwise...♗b5 and ...♖c8 with advantage to Black.

32...♘×e2 33.♘×b7!

33.♔×e2? ♗×d6 34.♗×d6 ♖×d6 35.♕×d6 ♗b5+.

33...♕c8?

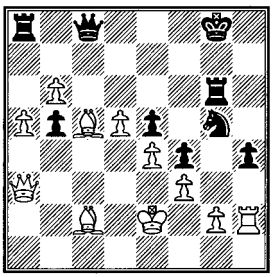
Much stronger was 33...♗×b4+ 34.♕×b4 ♕b8 35.♘c5 ♗b5 36.♗d3 ♘d4, when White definitely has compensation for the piece, but Black has the piece!

34.♘c5! ♗×c5 35.♗×c5 ♗b5 36.♖×b5

The other option with 36.♖×h4!? ♘g3 37.♗d3 ♗×d3 38.b7 (38.♔×d3 ♕b7 ∞) 38...♗×b1 39.b×c8♕+ ♖×c8 40.♕b2 ♘×f3+ 41.g×f3 ♘×e4+ 42.♔d1 ♘×c5 43.♕h2 ♖f8 gives chances to both sides.

36...a×b5 37.♔×e2 (D)

White felt that he could maintain a strong advantage in this position when he entered the variation starting with 32.♘×d6. His bishop pair and passed b- and d-pawns could easily overcome



Black's extra exchange. But thanks to various cross-pins, Black can be still in the game:

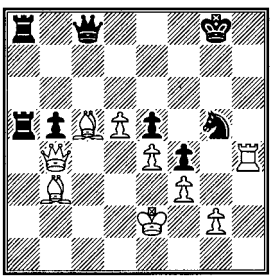
37...♖×b6!

Proving that the a5-pawn and the c5-bishop are false guards of the valuable b6-pawn.

38.♕b4!?

38.♗×b6? ♕×c2+ 39.♔f1 ♖c8 leads to a short end, but maybe White could have tried 38.♖×h4 ♖×a5 39.♕×a5 ♕×c5 40.♗d1 ♕e3+ 41.♔f1 ♕c1 −+ ± 38.♗b3 b4! (38...♖×a5 39.d6+ ♔g7 40.d7) 39.♗×b4 ♖b5 40.d6+ ♔g7 41.♖×h4 ♖ab8 42.d7 ♕×d7 43.♗a4 ♕b7 44.♗d2 ♖×a5 45.♗×a5 ♕a6+ 46.♕d3 ♕×a5 with equal chances in an unclear position.

38...♖ba6 39.♗b3 ♖×a5 40.♖×h4 (D)



I had now to play my 40th move (first time control) and I was feeling uncomfortable...

40...♖a2+!

Again proving that the b3-bishop is a false guard of the a2-square. Black, by returning the extra exchange, is able

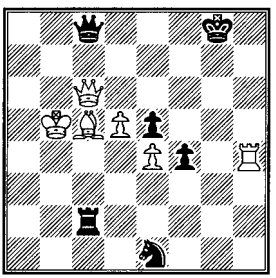
to stay in the game.

41.♗×a2 ♖×a2+ 42.♔d3 ♖×g2

Material has been restored, but Black's pieces are well-placed for the coming battle.

43.♖h1?

White could have saved himself by entering a complicated variation starting with 43.♕×b5! ♘×f3 44.♕c6! (44.♖h1? ♖d2+ 45.♔c3 ♖c2+) 44...♘e1+ 45.♔c4 ♖c2+ 46.♔b5 (D)

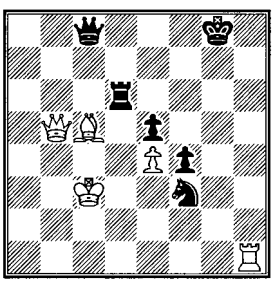


46...♕b8+ (46...♕×c6+ 47.d×c6 ♘d3 48.♗b6 ♖b2+ 49.♔a6 ♘b4+ 50.♔b7 ♘×c6 51.♔×c6 ♖b4 is a draw, but Black will suffer for it!) 47.♔a4 ♖a2+ 48.♗a3 ♕a7+ 49.♔b5 ♕b8+ 50.♔a4=.

43...♘×f3 44.d6

Unfortunately for White a forced move, as everything else loses on the spot: 44.♖h5 ♕a6; 44.♖a1 ♕h3; 44.♕×b5 ♖d2+ 45.♔c3 ♖c2+; 44.♗e7 ♕c2#.

44...♖d2+ 45.♔c3 ♖×d6 46.♕×b5 (D)



46...♔g7!

A quiet but strong move, which puts White into *zugzwang*.

47.♖b1 ♖c6 48.♔b4

48.♕b7+ ♕c7! (48...♕×b7 49.♖×b7+ ♔f6 50.♔c4) 49.♕×c7+ ♖×c7 50.♔c4 ♘d2+.

48...♖c7!

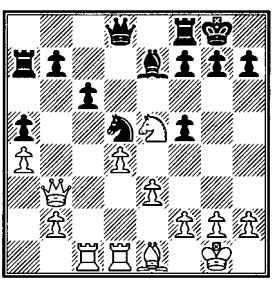
Providing real and not false protection to the black king, allowing the rest of Black's forces to become threatening. White lacks useful moves and it is no surprise that the end was near:

49.♗b6 ♖c2 50.♖b3 ♕e6! 51.♗c5 ♘d2 52.♕b7+ ♔g6 0-1

In the same tournament I was also "fortunate" enough to play the next masterpiece:

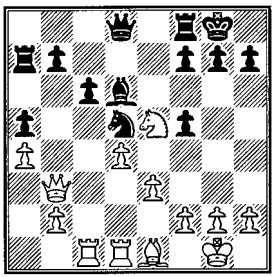
(108) Grivas – Condie
Copenhagen 1982
Slav Defense [D18]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 d×c4 5.a4 ♗f5 6.e3 e6 7.♗×c4 ♗b4 8.0-0 ♘bd7 9.♕b3 a5 10.♘a2 ♗e7 11.♗d2 ♕c7 12.♖fd1 ♘e4 13.♗e1 0-0 14.♖ac1 ♘b6 15.♗d3 ♘f6 16.♗×f5 e×f5 17.♘c3 ♕d8 18.♘e5 ♖a7 19.♘d3 ♘bd5 20.♘×d5 ♘×d5 21.♘e5 (D)



White seems to have gotten out of the opening with slight pressure in the queenside, but nothing really serious.

21...♗d6? (D)



A serious mistake. Black should have played 21...♕c8 22.♘c4 ♗d8±.

Suddenly my heart started a quick dance! I "felt" that there must be something connected to the c6-pawn and the black pieces on d8-, a7- and d5-squares.

22.♖×c6!

The b7-pawn was supposed to be an excellent guard for the c6-pawn; alas this proved wrong!

22...b×c6

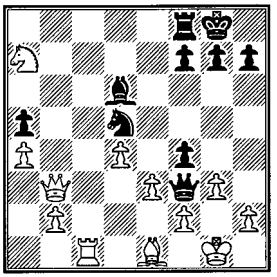
The alternative 22...♗×e5 23.♖c5 ♗×h2+ 24.♔×h2 ♘e7 (24...♕h4+ 25.♔g1 ♘f6 26.f3! ♕h5 27.♖×a5+−) 25.♗c3 b6 26.♖b5 ♖a6 27.d5± was not too encouraging either.

23.♘×c6 ♕h4?!

Black avoided 23...♗×h2+ as he thought that after 24.♔f1 (24.♔×h2? ♕d6+) 24...♕h4 (24...♕d7 25.♘×a7 ♕×a7 [25...♘×e3+ 26.♕×e3 ♕×a7 27.g3+−] 26.♕×d5 ♕a6+ 27.♕b5+−) 25.♘×a7 ♘f6 26.f3 ♕h5 27.♗f2 ♖e8 28.♕b5 he would not have any compensation for the lost pawn, but this was his best try. Although White is winning on the queenside, Black might create some serious counter-chances on the kingside.

24.g3 ♕g4 25.♘×a7 f4! 26.♖c1! ♕f3 (D)

Forced, as 26...♘×e3 27.f×e3 f×g3 28.h×g3 ♗×g3 29.♕d1 ♕g6 30.♔f1+− does not solve Black's problems.



27.♕d1!

Returning part of the extra material in order to liquidate into a won endgame should be a guide for every serious chessplayer.

27...♕e4

27...♕×d1 28.♖×d1 f×e3 29.f×e3 ♘×e3 30.♖c1 ♖b8 31.♘b5 ♗b4 32.♗×b4 a×b4 33.a5 cannot considered difficult for White. That's why Black chose to keep the queens on the board.

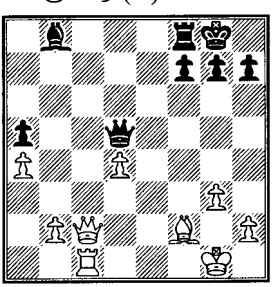
28.♕c2 ♕f3 29.♕d1 ♕e4 30.♕c2 ♕f3 31.♘b5!

After a repetition of moves aiming to win time on the clock (a useful strategy), White continues with the right move. His knight must return to the battlefield, as it has concluded its mission on the queenside.

31...♗b8 32.♘c3

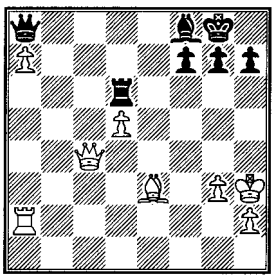
Although 32.♕c6! f×e3? 33.♘c3 is stronger, I was just thinking of my note after my 27th move.

32...f×e3 33.♘×d5 e×f2+ 34.♗×f2 ♕×d5 (D)



Now White's extra pawn will tell in the coming endgame. The rest was not that difficult, although a certain care was needed in view of White's somewhat unsafe king's position.

35.♕c5 ♕b3 36.♕×a5 ♕×b2 37.♕c3 ♕a2 38.♕c4 ♕a3 39.♖c3 ♕b2 40.♖c2 ♕a1+ 41.♔g2 ♗d6 42.♖a2 ♕d1 43.a5 ♖b8 44.♕c2 ♕h5 45.♕c6 ♗f8 46.a6 ♖b1 47.a7 ♕d1 48.♕c4 ♕h1+ 49.♔h3 ♖b6 50.♗e3 ♕a8 51.d5 ♖d6 (D)

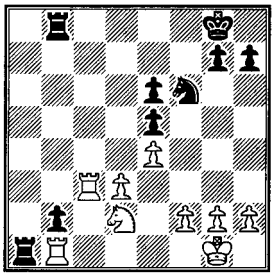


52.♖a6! ♖×d5 53.♕×d5! ♕×d5 54.a8♕ 1-0

(109) Koustas – Grivas
Athens 1982
Ruy Lopez [C77]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.d3 d6 6.c3 ♗e7 7.♘bd2 0-0 8.♘f1 b5 9.♗b3 d5 10.♕e2 d4! 11.♘g3 a5 12.a3 ♗e6 13.♗×e6 f×e6 14.a4 d×c3 15.b×c3 b4 16.♗b2 b×c3 17.♗×c3 ♗b4 18.♗×b4 a×b4 19.0-0 ♘d4 20.♘×d4 ♕×d4 21.♕a2 ♖a6 22.♖ac1 ♕d7 23.♕c4 ♖×a4 24.♕×c7 ♕×c7 25.♖×c7 ♖b8 26.♖b1 b3 27.♖c3 b2 28.♘f1 ♖a1 29.♘d2 (D)

White was counting on his last move to hold the position, as now 29...♖×b1+ 30.♘×b1 ♖a8 31.♖c2 is harmless. However, Black's positional advantage gives rise to a spectacular,



original and very effective tactical shot.

29...♘×e4!!

Again the d3-pawn proved to be a false guard!

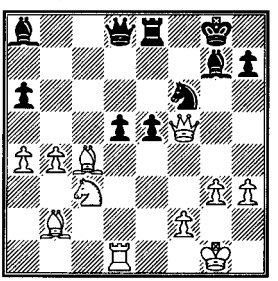
30.d×e4 ♖d8 31.♔f1

There is no salvation, as everything works in Black's favor! One nice line goes 31.♖c2 ♖×d2 32.♖c×b2 ♖d1+ 33.♖×d1 ♖×d1#.

31...♖×d2 32.♔e1 ♖d8 0-1

(110) Grivas – Trikaliotis
Khania 1982
Old Indian Defense [A55]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 d6 3.♘c3 ♘bd7 4.♘f3 e5 5.g3 ♗e7 6.♗g2 0-0 7.0-0 c6 8.e4 ♖e8 9.♖e1 ♗f8 10.h3 a6 11.b3 b5 12.c×b5 c×b5 13.♗b2 ♗b7 14.d5 ♘b6 15.♘d2 ♘fd7 16.b4 g6 17.♗f1 f5 18.♘b3 ♖c8 19.♘a5 ♗a8 20.a4 ♘c4 21.♘×c4 b×c4 22.e×f5 g×f5 23.♕h5 ♘f6 24.♕×f5 ♘×d5 25.♖e4 ♘f6 26.♖×c4 ♖×c4 27.♗×c4+ d5 28.♖d1 ♗g7 (D)



29.♘e4!

The various cross-pins (d-file, a2-g8 diagonal) help White gain a decisive advantage. The black d5-pawn is a false guard, as in reality guards nothing!

29...♔h8

A little bit more persistent was 29...♘×e4 although Black would not avoid defeat after 30.♕×e4 ♕d6 31.♗×d5+ ♔h8 32.♔g2 ♖d8 33.♗×a8 ♕×d1 34.♗×e5 ♕d7 35.♗×g7+ ♕×g7 36.b5 a×b5 37.a×b5.

30.♘×f6 ♕×f6

30...♗×f6 31.♗×a6 ♗c6 32.♗d3 ♕e7 33.b5

31.♕×f6 ♗×f6 32.♗×d5 ♖d8 33.♗b3 1-0

Conclusion

Beware of the unexpected. Do not let your eyes betray your plans; false guards are everywhere! Double-check your already protected squares and do not feel so confident about them; they might be secretly false guards!

The Double Exchange Sacrifice

Concept

The positional and tactical element of the exchange sacrifice (rook for bishop or knight) is a very important topic whose exploration requires advanced skills and competitive experience.

When we come to a double exchange sacrifice, then we must realize that this is a difficult subject to master, as the chessplayer is requested to overcome the dogmatic rules with which he has been brought up, in particular the quantitative evaluation of material.

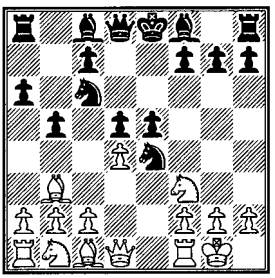
In the opening and middlegame our pieces should be identified as units that, by cooperating harmoniously, shape our plans that in turn are executed by means of moves. Each unit is an integral part of our position and we can determine our advantage or inferiority only by taking all units into account. Naturally, it is not easy to identify which of our pieces (or even the opponent's pieces) carries out the most significant function. We have to take several strategic elements into consideration, such as the center, open lines, initiative, attack, etc. When carrying out such evaluations the value of our rooks barely differs from that of our minor pieces, since an advantage is conferred by their fruitful cooperation and not their individual, predetermined value. If we accept that, as a rule, the superiority of the rook is realized in the endgame, we naturally come to the conclusion that an exchange sacrifice (or two!) in the opening or middlegame may be acceptable for many reasons:

1. To exploit our better development.
2. To destroy the opponent's pawn structure.
3. To open lines in order to attack.
4. To assume the initiative.
5. To control important squares.

More on this subject (as many more other!) can be found in my book *Chess College - Efstratios Grivas* (Gambit 2006) and *Kalite Fedasý & Konumsal Feda* (TSF 2010). So, here are two examples to help us understand the way that this mysterious double exchange sacrifice can work. Note that the whole game is annotated, as I think that it is extremely important to understand how the idea was born; through necessity or simply imagination, and how it was realized.

(111) Trindade – Grivas
Belfort 1983
Ruy Lopez [C80]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘×e4 6.d4 b5 7.♗b3 d5 (D)



8.c4?

A bad move but with an effective surprise value. At that time, I not only got confused but I felt "obliged" to beat my Brazilian opponent at any cost to punish him for his "ruthlessness."

8...d×c4?!

Although the text move cannot be strongly criticized, 8...♗g4! seems much stronger: 9.c×d5 (9.d×e5 d×c4 10.♕e2 ♘c5∓ [10...♕d3? 11.♕×d3 c×d3 12.♗d5 ♘b4 13.♗×a8 ♘c5 14.♘a3 ♗e7 15.♗d2 a5 16.♗×b4 a×b4 1-0 Caruso-Ruzzier, Padova 1998]) 9...♘×d4 10.♖e1 f5 (10...♗×f3 11.g×f3 ♘×b3 12.a×b3 ♘d6 13.♖×e5+ ♗e7 14.♕e2 [14.♘c3?! 0-0 15.♗f4 ♗f6 16.♖e2 ♘f5∓ Kavalek-Ratolistka, Kosice 1961] 14...♔f8 15.♘c3∞ as White finds compensation for his bad pawn structure in his piece activity and better cooperation) 11.♘c3 ♕f6!∓. A common mistake that Black should avoid is 8...♗e6? 9.c×d5 ♗×d5 10.♘×e5 ♘×e5 11.d×e5 c6 (11...♗×b3 12.♕×b3± Blazkova-Slajs, Ceske Budejovice 1999) 12.♗c2 ♗c5 13.♕e1 ♕h4 14.♗e3= Vitolinsh-Sideif Sade, Beltsy 1979.

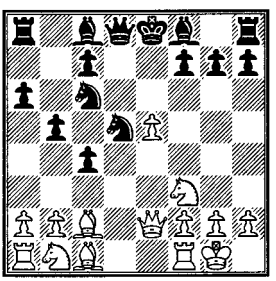
9.♕e2!

9.♗c2?! does not help: 9...f5 10.d×e5 ♕×d1 11.♗×d1 (11.♖×d1 ♗c5 12.♗e3 ♗×e3 13.f×e3 ♘b4∓) 11...♗b4∓.

9...♘f6!?

Black's main alternative is 9...♘d6 but this cannot give more than a draw: 10.d×e5 ♘f5 11.♕e4 (11.♖d1? ♘fd4 12.♘×d4 ♘×d4 13.♕e4 ♗f5 14.♕×d4 ♕×d4 15.♖×d4 c×b3∓ Kristjansson-Amado, Vrnjacka Banja 1963) 11...♗d7 12.♗c2 ♘b4 13.♖d1 ♘×c2 14.♖×d7 ♕×d7 15.♕×a8+ ♕d8 (15...♔e7? 16.♘c3 c6 17.♗g5+±) 16.♕c6+ ♕d7 17.♕a8+=.

10.d×e5 ♘d5 11.♗c2 (D)



White has sacrificed a pawn but as compensation he has gained time for easy development, a space advantage and safer king. Well, still Black has the pawn!

11...♗c5 12.♖d1 ♘ce7?

I think that Black should strongly consider returning the pawn with 12...♘cb4! 13.♗e4 (13.♘c3 c6 14.♘e4 ♘×c2 15.♗g5 ♕c7 16.♕×c2 [16.♘d6+ ♔f8 17.♕×c2 ♗×d6 18.e×d6 ♕×d6∓] 16...♗f5∓) 13...c6 14.a3 ♘d3 15.♗×d3 c×d3 16.♕×d3 ♕b6 17.♕c2 when he is able to achieve a perfectly acceptable position.

13.♘c3 ♗e6 14.a4?

14.♘e4 ♗b6 15.♘eg5 ♕d7 (15...h6? 16.♘×e6 f×e6 17.♘d4 ♗×d4 18.♕h5+ ♔d7 19.♖×d4± Jakirlic-Wilkins, Penrith 2003) 16.♘×e6 f×e6

17.♘g5 ♖f8 is not very clear but White could gain a significant advantage with 14.♘g5! ♕d7 15.♘×e6 f×e6 (15...♕×e6 16.♕f3 ♖d8 17.♘e4±) 16.♕h5+ g6 17.♕h3 0-0 18.♘e4 ♕c6 19.♗g5.

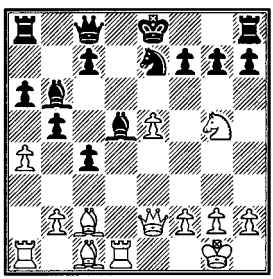
14...♕c8! 15.♘×d5

After 15.a×b5 ♘×c3 16.b×c3 a×b5 17.♖×a8 ♕×a8 18.♘g5 ♕c8 19.♗e3 ♗×e3 20.♕×e3 h6 21.♘×e6 ♕×e6 22.♕e4 ♕c6 23.♕h4 ♕e6 Black equalizes.

15...♗×d5

15...♘×d5 16.a×b5 a×b5 17.♖×a8 ♕×a8 18.♘g5 ♕c8 19.♕f3 c6 20.♕g3 seems unpleasant for Black.

16.♘g5 ♗b6? (D)



Black misses his chance. He should have played 16...h6 17.♘e4 ♗b4 18.♗d2 ♗×d2 19.♕×d2 ♗×e4 20.♗×e4 ♖b8 21.a×b5 a×b5 when he would be able to breathe freely. White still can maintain some kind of initiative thanks to his better placed pieces, which fully compensate for his pawn deficit.

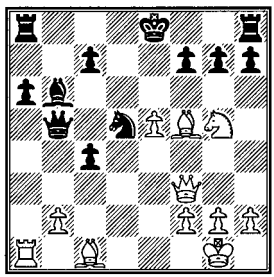
17.♖×d5!

Although 17.♘×h7 is also strong, this positional sacrifice is an excellent one. Black's light squares become weak and White gains some important tempi to continue his attack against the black king.

17...♘×d5 18.♕f3 ♕d7 19.♗f5! ♕c6

Judging by the outcome of the game, Black should have preferred 19...♕e7 20.♕×d5 ♖d8 (20...0-0 21.♗×h7+ ♔h8 22.♗c2+−) 21.♕c6+ ♔f8 22.♗f4 but this can be considered a slow but sure death.

20.a×b5 ♕×b5 (D)



20...a×b5 21.♖×a8+ ♕×a8 22.♗e4+− is not an option either.

21.♘×f7!

The f7-pawn is of minor importance as a material gain, but the additional light-square weaknesses that are created around the black king and its presence in the center are decisive factors.

21...♖f8

Unfortunately, the black king cannot find a safe shelter: 21...0-0 (21...♔×f7 22.♗d7+) 22.♗e6 ♖ae8 23.♗×d5 c6 24.♗×c6 ♕b4 25.♕e4! ♖×f7 26.♗×e8 ♖×f2 27.♗e3 ♗×e3 28.♕×e3 simply terminates Black's survival chances.

22.e6 g6

22...h6 23.♘e5 ♔d8 24.e7+! ♔×e7 25.b3! (25.♘g6+ ♔d6 26.♗f4+ ♔c6 27.♗e4 is also fine) is also a lost cause for Black.

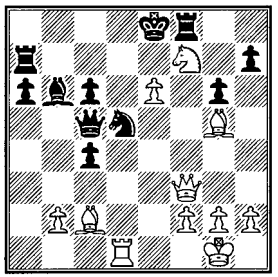
23.♗c2?!

23.♗e4! c6 24.♘d6+ ♔e7 25.♘×b5 ♖×f3 26.♗×f3 is a very simple win.

23...♕c5

Black had to take account of the 24.♗a4 threat.

24.♗g5 c6 25.♖d1 ♖a7 (D)



Or 25...♖b8 26.♗a4 and Black has to resign. 26.♖×d5 ♕×f2+ 27.♕×f2 ♗×f2+ 28.♔×f2 c×d5 29.♗a4+ ♖b5 30.♔e3 ♖×f7 31.♗×b5+ a×b5 32.e×f7+ ♔×f7 33.♔d4 ♔e6 34.♗d2+– is equally good.

26.♖×d5!

A second exchange sacrifice on the same square! But this time this sacrifice must be considered the introduction to a winning combination and not a positional one as it was the case on the 17th move.

26...♕×f2+

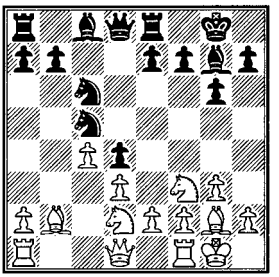
26...♖a×f7 27.e×f7+ ♖×f7 28.♖×c5 ♖×f3 29.♖e5+; 26...c×d5 27.♗a4+

27.♕×f2 ♗×f2+ 28.♔h1! ♗b6 29.♘d6# 1-0

I was so dizzy and in a great time-trouble, that I did not feel that this was possible. In those times when I had a quarrel with my girlfriend she would upset me by just shouting "Trindade" to me!

(112) Conquest – Grivas
Afitos 1991
Réti Opening [A01]

1.b3 g6 2.♗b2 ♘f6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 d5 5.c4 d4 6.♘f3 c5 7.b4 0-0 8.b×c5 ♘c6 9.0-0 ♘d7 10.d3 ♘×c5 11.♘bd2 ♖e8!? (D)



Alternatives are:

(a) 11...h6 12.♗a3 ♕a5 13.♗×c5 ♕×c5 14.♕a4 ♗d7 15.♖ab1 ♕a5 16.♕×a5 ♘×a5 17.♘b3 ♘×b3 18.♖×b3 b6= Dizdar-Lalic,B, Sarajevo 1988.

(b) 11...a5 12.♖b1 ♖e8 13.♗a3 ♘a6 14.♘e1 ♘ab4∞ Miles-Sokolov, Belgrade 1988.

12.♗a3

White can also choose:

(a) 12.a4 e5 13.♘b3 ♘e6 14.♗a3 ♖b8 (14...♗d7 15.♘fd2 ♘a5? 16.♘×a5 ♕×a5 17.♗×b7 ♖ab8 18.♗d5 ♘c5 19.♗×c5 ♕×c5 20.♘e4 ♕c7 21.♕c2 ♗e6 22.♗×e6 ♖×e6 23.♖fb1± Giertz-Konopka, Marbach 1994) 15.♘fd2 ♗f8 16.♗×f8 ♔×f8∞ Keene-Reichenbach, Mannheim 1975.

(b) 12.♘g5 ♗g4 13.♘de4 ♘a6 14.h3 ♗d7 15.♗a3 h6 16.♘f3 ♕c8 17.♔h2 ♘d8 18.♖b1 ♗c6= Heimsoth-Becker, Essen 2004.

12...♕a5 13.♕c1

13.♗×c5!? ♕×c5 is an interesting alternative:

(a) 14.♕a4 ♕b4 15.♕×b4 ♘×b4 16.a3 ♘c6 17.♖fb1 ♖b8 18.♘e1 ♗d7= Schebler-Ahn, Leuven 1998.

(b) 14.♖b1 ♕a5 15.♕b3 ♖d8 16.♕b5 ♕c7 17.♘b3 ♗f8 18.♘c5 e6 19.♘e4 ♗e7= Dizdar-Popovic, Caorle 1982.

(c) 14.♘b3?! ♕h5 15.♖b1 ♖d8 16.♕c1 ♗g4∓ Abed-Siebarth, Willingen 2003.

13...♘a4 14.♘b3 ♕c7

14...♕h5 15.♕g5! ♕×g5 16.♘×g5 ♘c3 17.♖fe1 ♗g4 18.♘f3 e5∞ looks

like a fair option.

15.♕c2 ♗d7 16.♖ae1

White is getting ready to break up the center with the help of the e3-advance. This seems to be his only dangerous plan at the moment.

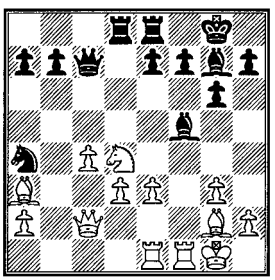
16...♖ad8!

Black is now all set to continue with ...h6 and ...e5, developing a strong initiative. White therefore feels obliged to seek complications.

17.e3 d×e3 18.f×e3 ♗f5! 19.♘fd4

This was a must, as 19.e4?! ♗g4 would ensure Black a permanent positional advantage in view of the weak light-square complex in White's center.

19...♘×d4 20.♘×d4 (D)



20.e×d4 ♖×d4! is not much of a difference.

20...♖×d4!

A very interesting (and more or less forced) exchange sacrifice for purely positional compensation (occupation of important central squares and better pawn structure). Instead, 20...♗d7?! 21.♖b1 b6 22.♘b5 ♗×b5 23.♖×b5 can only be preferable for White. Of course there is nothing strange with that; such things happen in a lot of games.

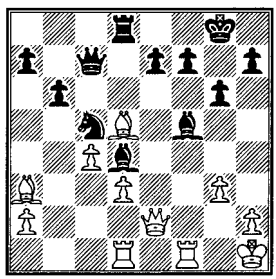
21.e×d4

White had to accept the sacrifice, as after 21.♕×a4 ♕d7! 22.♕×a7 (22.♕×d7? ♖×d7 23.d4 ♗d3 24.♖f2 e5 25.d×e5 ♗×c4∓) 22...♖×d3 23.♗b4 ♖c8 24.a3 ♖×c4 25.♕×b7 ♕×b7 26.♗×b7 ♖c7 Black's stands slightly because of White's shattered pawn-structure.

21...♗×d4+ 22.♔h1 ♘c5 23.♖d1

White should have complicated matters further with 23.♗×c5! ♗×c5 24.♗e4 ♗h3 25.♖f3 (25.♗g2 ♗f5=) 25...b6 26.♕b2 ♖d8 27.♕d2 ♗e6 28.♕f4.

23...♖d8 24.♕e2 b6 25.♗d5 (D)



25...♖×d5!

A second exchange sacrifice, shortly after the first one. This new sacrifice is justified by the subsequently increased activity of the black minor pieces, in sharp contrast to the "clumsy" white rooks. Now, this action is something you do not really come across too often (see the comment to the 20th move). A double exchange sacrifice, if correct, gives extreme pleasure as it is something you do not do daily!

26.c×d5 ♕d7 27.♖f4?

White overestimates his chances. After 27.♕f3! e5! (after 27...f6!? 28.♗×c5! b×c5 29.♖b1 ♗h3 30.♖fe1 ♗g4 31.♕e4 ♗f5 Black could agree to a draw by repetition) 28.♗×c5 ♗×c5 29.♖c1 ♗d4 an unclear position arises, despite the fact that materially Black is two exchanges down. This confirms the validity of his earlier choices.

27...♕×d5+ 28.♕g2 ♗e6! 29.♖×d4?

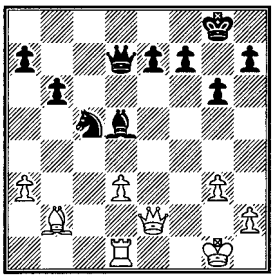
White feels compelled to return

part of the extra material as he could find no useful course of action, while Black's threats in the direction of the white king were becoming annoying. After 29.h4 ♕d6 30.♔h2 ♗e5 31.♖b4 ♗d5 no one may feel attracted to White's position, but still this seems to be the only try. As this was the third exchange sacrifice in this game, I feel that neither of the two opponents really liked his rooks!

29...♕×d4 30.♗b2 ♕d8! 31.♔g1 ♗d5?!

The simplest was 31...♗×a2! and then ...♗d5, with an extra pawn compared to the game.

32.♕e2 ♕d7 33.a3 (D)



Black's position seems to be quite nice, but still he has to find an acceptable plan. Attacking the white king cannot be a bad one!

33...♘e6!

Threatening ...♘g5-h3+.

34.♕e3 f6 35.h4 ♘g7! 36.♔h2 ♘f5

What would you prefer, the black f5-knight or the white d1-rook?

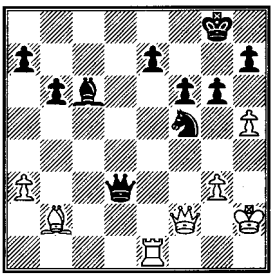
37.♕f4 ♕e6!

Threatening 38...♕e2+.

38.♕d2 ♗c6 39.♖e1 ♕d6! 40.♕f2 ♕×d3

Another winning line was 40...♘×h4 41.♗e5 f×e5 42.g×h4 e4+.

41.h5 (D)



41...♘h6?

Black would win easily with 41...♕d5, intending 42...♘e3!!. With his last move he believed that the win was very near. However, he had overlooked White's next move, after which a queen exchange is forced and this results in an endgame where White holds the draw without much effort.

42.♕e2! ♕×e2+

So Black was forced to exchange queens, losing his most valuable weapon, the attack against the white king.

43.♖×e2 ♔f7 44.♖c2 ♗e4 45.h×g6+ h×g6 46.♖c7 a6 47.♗d4 b5 48.♗c5 ♘g8 49.♖a7

White wins back one of his less three pawns, achieving equality as the black kingside pawns lacks activity.

49...♗d3 50.♗b4 ♗c4 51.♖×a6 e5 52.♖c6 ♗d3 53.♖d6 ♗c4 54.♖c6 ♗d3 55.♔g1 ♘h6 56.♔f2 ♘g4+ 57.♔e1 e4 ½-½

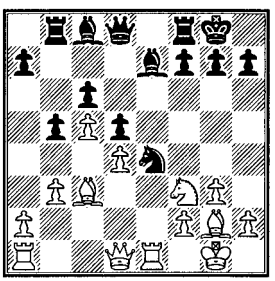
There is no way for either side to try for something more. A truly sad end to a very interesting game with two exchange sacrifices on d4 and d5!.

The reader should also take in account the famous game Topalov-Aronian, Wijk aan Zee 2006, which has been analyzed in a lot of sources and magazines and was voted the best game of *Informator* 96. In this game a double

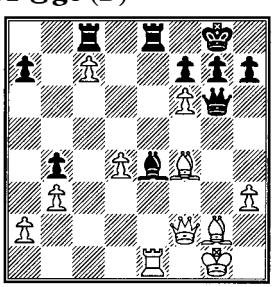
exchange sacrifice was realized by White; both his rooks were sacrificed on e4! Here is the game (without notes):

(113) Topalov – Aronian
Wijk aan Zee 2006
Queen's Indian Defense [E15]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗a6 5.b3 ♗b4+ 6.♗d2 ♗e7 7.♗g2 c6 8.♗c3 d5 9.♘e5 ♘fd7 10.♘×d7 ♘×d7 11.♘d2 0-0 12.0-0 ♘f6 13.e4 b5 14.e×d5 e×d5 15.♖e1 ♖b8 16.c5 ♗c8 17.♘f3 ♘e4 (D)



18.♖×e4 d×e4 19.♘e5 ♕d5 20.♕e1 ♗f5 21.g4 ♗g6 22.f3 b4 23.f×e4 ♕e6 24.♗b2 ♗f6 25.♘×c6 ♕×c6 26.e5 ♕a6 27.e×f6 ♖fe8 28.♕f1 ♕e2 29.♕f2 ♕×g4 30.h3 ♕g5 31.♗c1 ♕h5 32.♗f4 ♖bd8 33.c6 ♗e4 34.c7 ♖c8 35.♖e1 ♕g6 (D)



36.♖×e4 ♖×e4 37.d5 ♖ce8 38.d6 ♖e1+ 39.♔h2 ♕f5 40.♕g3 g6 41.♕g5 ♕×g5 42.♗×g5 ♖d1 43.♗c6 ♖e2+ 44.♔g3 1-0

Conclusion

A double exchange sacrifice is not a daily occurrence, but it should be kept in mind. The compensation should be evaluated and the tactics calculated precisely and correctly. Yes, chess is a rich and deep game!

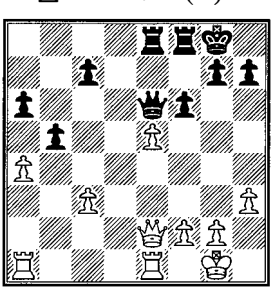
Losing a Queen

Concept

Losing a queen is not a happy moment for a chessplayer. It is a (nasty) feeling that every chessplayer in the world has experienced! Well, barring the games that a queen is lost without any material compensation, in most of the cases the blundering side can put up some resistance. We will examine some positions where the blundering side got as compensation for his queen a pair of minor pieces (or a rook). Our first example is a model about what not to do!

(114) Tsomis – Grivas
Athens 1984
Ruy Lopez [C81]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♘×e4 6.d4 b5 7.♗b3 d5 8.d×e5 ♗e6 9.♕e2 ♗c5 10.♘bd2 ♘×d2 11.♗×d2 0-0 12.h3 ♕d7 13.c3 d4 14.♗×e6 ♕×e6 15.c×d4 ♘×d4 16.♘×d4 ♗×d4 17.♗c3 ♗×c3 18.b×c3 f6 19.♖fe1 ♖ae8 20.a4 (D)



White seems to be under pressure, as his e- and c-pawns are rather weak.

20...♕×e5??

Completely missing the idea behind 20.a4!. I should have played 20...c6 although after 21.a×b5 a×b5 22.f4 f×e5 23.f×e5 White probably will save the half-point, but not without hard work.

21.♕a2+!

Thanks for the queen!

21...♔h8 22.♖×e5

Of course I could resign here. I just played on in order to calm down.

22...♖×e5 23.a×b5 a×b5 24.♕a7 c5 25.♕b7 b4 26.♖a8 ♖g8 27.c×b4 c×b4 28.♕b8 ♖×b8 29.♖×b8+ ♖e8 30.♖×e8# 1-0

What is more strange is the fact that this was my only defeat in a round-robin tournament where in the end I finished second and achieved my second IM norm!

Straight blunders occur every day. I am sure that you have seen various versions of the following example in your visits to the local club or you have been the victim! After all, we are living a blunderful life!

(115) Grivas – Papoutsis

Athens 1980

Caro-Kann Defense [B18]

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 d×e4 4.♘×e4 ♗f5 5.♘g3 ♗g6 6.♘f3 ♘d7 7.♗f4

This is a harmless line for Black. Of course 7.h4 is the most commonly played move.

7...e6 8.♗d3 ♘e7

8...♘gf6 is again the natural move: 9.0-0 ♗e7 10.♖e1 ♘d5 ∞ Tsiropoulas-Saltaev, Agios Kirikos 2006.

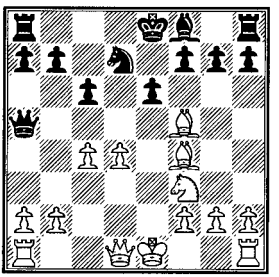
9.c4?!

White wanted to avoid 9.0-0 ♘d5 but the text-move offers problems only to him.

9...♘f5?

9...♗×d3! 10.♕×d3 ♘g6 11.♗d2 ♘de5! (11...c5? 12.0-0 ♘b6 13.b3 c×d4 14.♕×d4 ♕×d4 15.♘×d4 ± Stavropoulou-Tragelli, Athens 1993) 12.♕b3 (12.♘×e5?! ♘×e5 13.♕c3 ♗b4∓) 12...♘×f3+ 13.g×f3 b5 14.c×b5 ♖b8 is good for Black.

10.♘×f5 ♗×f5 11.♗×f5 ♕a5+ (D)



The reader should keep in mind that at the time this game was played, I was just a 14-year old boy with little understanding of chess. Nowadays, 14-year old boys are grandmasters but in my time we where just still learning the rules! Well, the times they are a-changin', aren't they?

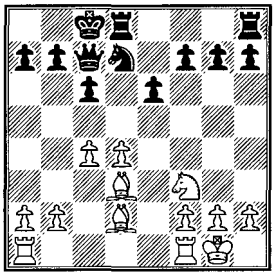
12.♕d2??

12.♗d2 ♕×f5 13.♕b3 0-0-0 14.0-0= is natural and forced.

12...♗b4

Although my opponent hesitated a bit, puzzled by my reaction, he had no reason not to grab my queen. As far as I remember I was ready to cry but in the end I decided just to pull myself together and try to fight (a lost cause of course).

13.♗d3 ♗×d2+ 14.♗×d2 ♕c7 15.0-0 0-0-0?! (D)



White has only the bishop pair for his queen. This should not be enough if Black knows what to do (exchange pieces and get to the endgame is a reasonable plan) which probably was not the case in this game, as he started producing small inaccuracies. Black had no reason to castle queenside asking for complications. Castling kingside (or same castle in general) should be fine with such a material advantage.

16.b4 h6 17.a4 g5 18.♗c3 ♘f6?!

18...g4 19.♘d2 ♔b8 (19...e5 20.d×e5 ♘×e5 21.♗f5+ ♔b8 22.c5 h5 23.♘e4) is more natural.

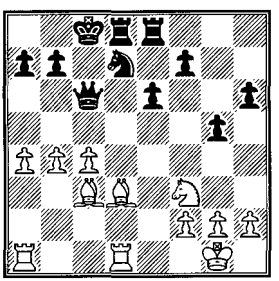
19.♖fd1 ♘d7

Admitting his mistake on the previous move, but in the meantime he has lost precious time.

20.d5 ♖he8?!

20...g4 21.♗×h8 g×f3 22.♗d4 ♘e5 23.♗e4 f×g2 preserved Black's advantage, although White has some chances.

21.d×c6 ♕×c6?! (D)



21...b×c6 was forced.

22.b5?

White did not seize his opportunity. With 22.♘d4! ♕c7 23.♘b5 ♕f4 24.g3 he could even play for a win!

22...♕c7 23.a5 e5?

This offers nothing positive and at the same time it weakens the light squares. 23...♕f4 24.♗d4 g4 25.♗e3 ♕f6 26.♘d4 ♘c5 27.♗e2 ♖d7∓ was correct for Black.

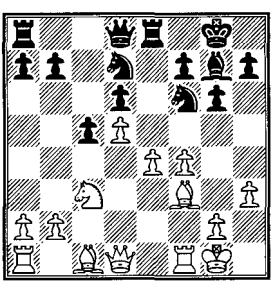
24.♗f5! ½-½

24.b6 a×b6 25.♗f5 ♔b8 26.♖×d7 ♖×d7 27.a×b6 ♕d8 28.♗×d7 ♕×d7 29.♗×e5+ ♖×e5 30.♘×e5 ♕e6∓. I did not want to further tempt fate, so I offered a draw. My opponent was happy to hear it and he agreed immediately! Was I lucky to escape or unlucky not to continue? Well, this was just a bad game for both sides, so we cannot draw fair conclusions. But it proves that even with a superior material advantage we must form plans and correctly execute them.

But let's move to more "serious" examples:

(116) Grivas – Timoshchenko
Plovdiv 1988
King's Indian Defense [E68]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f4 0-0 6.♘f3 c5 7.d5 e6 8.♗e2 e×d5 9.c×d5 ♗g4 10.0-0 ♘bd7 11.h3 ♗×f3 12.♗×f3 ♖e8 (D)



This is a well-known position, at least for those who are fond of the Four Pawns Attack system in the King's Indian Defense. There are many ways for White to proceed and the one chosen in the game seems to be the most double-edged.

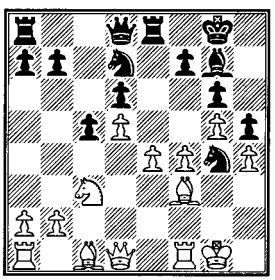
13.g4!? h6

The most common and best reaction. 13...♘f8 14.g5 ♘6d7 15.h4 ♖b8 16.h5 is dominating for White, as in Brionne-Frois, Groningen 1981.

14.h4 h5! 15.g5

15.g×h5? ♘×h5 16.♗×h5 ♕×h4! can be good only for Black.

15...♘g4! (D)



Passive is 15...♘h7?! 16.♗g2 ♖b8 17.e5 d×e5 18.f5± Colin-Rayner, Hastings 2005. Black must be active in order to maintain the balance.

16.e5?!

Too optimistic. White should have chosen 16.♗×g4 h×g4 17.♖e1 c4 18.♕×g4 (18.♗e3 ♗×c3 19.b×c3 ♖×e4 20.♕×g4 ♕e7 21.♗f2 ♘c5 was unclear in Kouatly-Kindermann, Trnava 1987) 18...♘c5 19.h5 ♗×c3 20.b×c3 ♘×e4 21.h×g6 f×g6 22.♗e3∞ Charpentier-Minero Pineda, San Jose 2001.

16...d×e5 17.♗×g4 h×g4 18.♕×g4

18.f5 does not solve White's problems: 18...g×f5 19.♖×f5 e4 20.♕×g4 ♘e5! (20...♗d4+?! 21.♔f1 ♘e5∞ Albarran-Della Morte, Vicente Lopez 2004) 21.♕×e4 ♘g6 22.♕g4 ♖e1+ 23.♔f2 ♖h1∓.

18...e×f4 19.♗×f4 ♗d4+ 20.♔h2

No help was 20.♔g2 ♘e5 21.♗×e5 ♖×e5 22.♕f3 ♕e7∓.

20...♘e5 21.♕g3

After 21.♕g2 ♕d7! I could not decide on a proper continuation. Perhaps exchanging queens and trying to defend a worse endgame was the best option: 22.♕h3 ♕×h3+ 23.♔×h3 ♘d3 24.♖f3 ♘×f4+ 25.♖×f4 ♖ad8 26.♖d1 ♖e5∓.

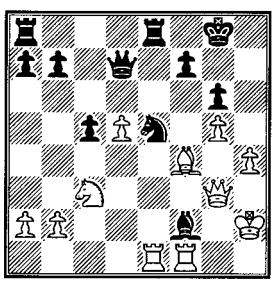
21...♕d7!

Black activates all his pieces. 21...♗×c3?! 22.♕×c3 ♕×d5 23.♖ad1=/∞ or 21...c4?! 22.♖ad1 ♘d3 23.♖×d3 c×d3 24.♕×d3=/∞ would be just naive.

22.♖ae1?!

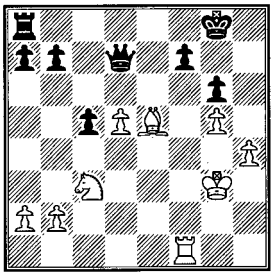
For better or worse, White could only play 22.♕h3 ♖ad8 23.♖ae1 ♘g4+ 24.♔g2 ♗×c3 25.♕×c3 ♕×d5+ 26.♕f3 ♕×f3+ 27.♔×f3 f5 28.g×f6 ♘×f6 29.♖×e8+ ♖×e8 30.♗e3 b6∓ and try to defend this endgame a pawn down.

22...♗f2! (D)



I did not see this coming! Suddenly I realized that I was fighting for a lost cause. Black would win material (23.♖×f2 ♘g4+ 24.♔×g2 ♖×e1) and soon the game. So, I thought that I must try to be creative!

23.♖×e5!? ♗×g3+ 24.♔×g3 ♖×e5 25.♗×e5 (D)



White sacrificed his queen for two minor pieces. In general Black's material advantage would be too much to ignore, but in this particular position White has two other pluses; his passed d-pawn and the weaknesses in the dark squares around the black king. Black must react carefully, never thinking that he can win on automatic pilot.

25...♕e7! 26.♗f4

Unfortunately after 26.♖e1 ♖e8! 27.d6 ♕×e5+ 28.♖×e5 ♖×e5 29.d7 Black wins with 29...♖e3+ 30.♔f4 ♖d3 31.♘e4 b6 32.♘f6+ ♔f8 33.♔e4 ♖d4+ 34.♔e5 ♔e7.

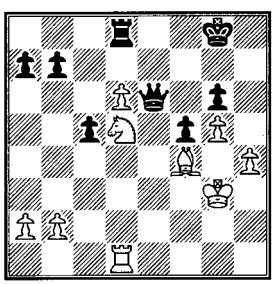
26...f5!

Gaining access on the important g4-square and avoids a potential ♘e4.

27.d6

A last try. Not difficult for Black is 27.g×f6 ♕×f6 28.♖e1 ♖f8−+.

27...♕e6 28.♖d1 ♖d8 29.♘d5 (D)



29...♖×d6!

Returning some material to ensure the annihilation of our opponent's counterplay is an important rule and we should keep it in mind. Probably Black has other ways to exploit his material advantage, but this is the most clear-cut.

30.♘f6+ ♕×f6 31.♖×d6

31.g×f6 ♖×d1 is even simpler.

31...♕×b2 32.♖×g6+ ♔h7

If White's h-pawn were already in h5, then he would have good surviving chances, but there is no "'if" – not in a chess game, or in the real life!

33.♖e6 ♕×a2 34.g6+ ♔g7 35.♗e5+ ♔h6 36.♗f4+ ♔h5 37.♖d6 ♕e2!

Keep in mind the important note in 26...f5!.

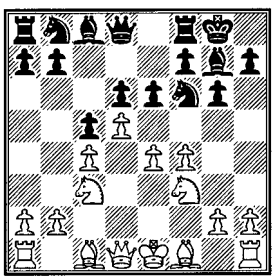
38.♗g5 ♕e5+ 39.♗f4 ♕e2 40.♗g5 ♕e5+ 41.♗f4 ♕c3+ 0-1

(117) Yuneev – Grivas
Leningrad 1989
King's Indian Defense [E76]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f4

Again the "4PA" of the King's Indian Defense. Is there any relationship between the opening and losing the queen?

5...0-0 6.♘f3 c5 7.d5 e6 (D)

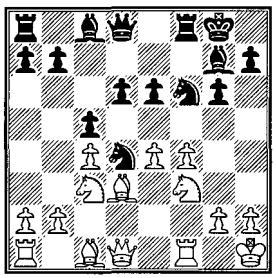


8.d×e6 f×e6

The main alternative is 8...♗×e6 9.♗d3 ♘c6 (9...♗g4 10.h3 ♗×f3 11.♕×f3 ♘c6 12.0-0 ♖b8 13.♗e3 a6 14.♖ad1± Simonyi-Grivas, Vrsac 1983) 10.f5 ♗d7 11.0-0 ♘g4 12.♘d5 ♘b4 13.♔h1 (13.h3 ♘e5 14.♘×e5 ♗×e5= Marjanovic-Terzic, Zenica

1987) 13...♘×d5 14.e×d5 ♖e8 15.♗g5 ♕a5= Lanka-Gufeld, Jurmala 1978.

9.♗d3 ♘c6 10.0-0 ♘d4 11.♔h1!? (D)



Well-known (even on those days!) is 11.♘g5 e5 (11...h6 12.♘f3 e5 13.♘h4! ♕e8 14.f5 g×f5 15.♘×f5 ♗×f5 [15...♘×f5?! 16.e×f5 e4 17.♗c2 ♕e5 18.♗f4 ♕d4+ 19.♕×d4 c×d4 20.♘×e4 ♗×f5 21.♘×f6+ ♖×f6 22.♗×f5 ♖×f5 23.♗×d6± Inkiov-Grivas, Athens 1994] 16.e×f5 b5 17.b3 +=) 12.f5 h6 13.♘h3 g×f5 14.e×f5 b5∞ Christiansen-Kasparov, Moscow 1982.

11...♘h5

11...♗d7 12.♗d2 ♗c6 13.♘g5 h6 14.♘f3 ♘h5∞ Yuneev-Fedorov, St Petersburg 1994 or Vakin-Minasian, Alma-Ata 1991 are fair alternatives.

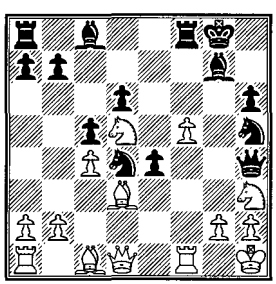
12.♘g5 h6 13.♘h3 e5 14.f5

The only move. Bad is 14.f×e5? ♗×h3 15.g×h3 ♕h4∓.

14...♕h4 15.♘d5

15.♗e3?! did not satisfy White: 15...g×f5 16.e×f5 ♘f6 17.♗f2 ♕g4∓ Bousios-Grivas, Thessaloniki 1983.

15...g×f5 16.e×f5 e4? (D)



A blunder! Black was forced to play 16...♘×f5 17.♗×f5 ♖×f5 18.♖×f5 ♗×f5 19.♗g5 ♕g4 (19...h×g5? 20.♘e7+ ♔h8 21.♘×f5+-) 20.♘e7+ ♔h8 21.♘×f5 ♕×f5 22.♕×h5 ♔g8∞. It must be noted that the other option 16...♗×f5? is also bad: 17.♗g5 ♕g4 18.♘e7+ ♔h8 19.♗×f5 ♕×d1 20.♖a×d1 h×g5 21.♘g6+ ♔g8 22.♘×f8 ♖×f8 23.g4±.

17.♗g5!

As in the previous game, I did not see this coming!

17...h×g5 18.♘e7+ ♔f7 19.♘g6 ♘g3+

And I was a bit lucky that my queen can at least escape.

20.h×g3 ♕h6 21.♗×e4!

Precise! 21.♘×f8 e×d3 is not clear.

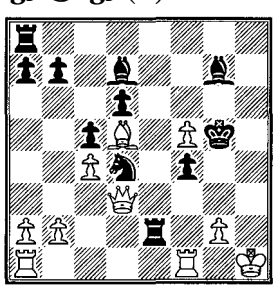
21...♖e8 22.♗d5+ ♔f6

Before the game I was thinking about some kind of an attack; but I never did think that I would carry it out with my king!

23.g4 ♗d7 24.♕d3 ♖e2 25.♘gf4

25.♖ae1! ♖ae8 26.♖×e2 ♖×e2 27.♕g3 ♗f8 28.♖e1 seemed to be a safe way for White to crown his advantage. After 25.♘gf4 I was quite disappointed with my position. I even thought about resigning, but in the end I decided to carry on and give up my queen. After all, I had nothing more to lose than my lost position!

25...g×f4! 26.g5+ ♕×g5 27.♘×g5 ♔×g5 (D)



Well, my position does not look that bad. My bishops are fine, my knight and rooks are active (the second one comes to h8) and even my king can help! I felt that I had some chances, until my opponent's next move hit me like a rock!

28.♖×f4!

After a long thought White found (probably) the only good move. 28.g3? f3 29.♖×f3 ♖h8+ 30.♔g1 ♘×f3+ 31.♕×f3 ♗d4+ 32.♔f1 ♖f2± or even worse 28.♖ae1? ♖h8+ 29.♔g1 ♗×f5 30.♕d1 ♖he8∓ would make Black happy.

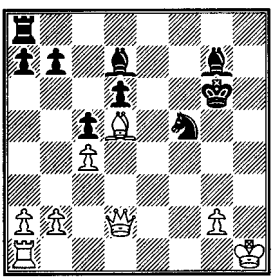
28...♘×f5

28...♖h8+ 29.♔g1 ♔×f4 30.♖f1+ ♔g4 (30...♔g5 31.♕g3+ ♔f6 32.♕g6+) 31.♗f3+ ♔g5 32.♗×e2 ♘×e2+ 33.♕×e2 ♗d4+ 34.♖f2+− was not a solution either.

29.♖g4+

Or 29.♖af1 ♖h8+ 30.♔g1 ♖e5 31.♕f3 but White should avoid 29.♖×f5+? ♗×f5 30.♕×e2 ♖h8+ 31.♔g1 ♗d4+ 32.♕f2=.

29...♔×g4 30.♕×e2+ ♔g5 31.♕d2+ ♔g6 (D)



32.g3!

32.g4 also wins but White must play with accuracy: 32...♖h8+ 33.♔g2! (33.♔g1? ♗d4+ 34.♔g2 ♘e3+ 35.♔g3 ♗×g4 36.♕×e3 ♖h3+ 37.♔×g4 ♖×e3∓) 33...♘h4+ 34.♔f1 (34.♔g3 ♗e5+ 35.♔f2 ♗d4+ 36.♔e2 ♗×g4+ 37.♔d3±) 34...♖f8+ 35.♔e1 ♖e8+ 36.♔f2 ♗d4+ 37.♔g3 ♗e5+ 38.♔h3 ♖h8 39.♕d3+ ♔g7 40.♖f1!+−.

32...♖e8

32...♘×g3+ 33.♔g2 ♗e5 34.♖g1+−

33.♖e1 ♗h6 34.♕c3 ♘e3 35.♗×b7 ♗f5 36.♗f3 ♖e7 37.g4 ♗d7 38.♕d3+ ♔g7 39.♕×d6 ♗g5 1-0

And my flag felled before White could play 40.♖×e3! ♖×e3 41.♕×d7+.

Conclusion

It would be better not to lose your queen, but if this nasty thing happens, then look for some compensation; you might find out that there is plenty! Then put your head down and try your best; after all you have nothing to lose! Losing a queen (without a concrete reason) is always a good first step to defeat!

Twins

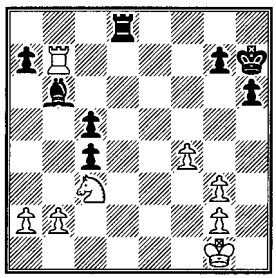
Concept

Combinations that can be repeated are not unusual and something that may be classified. The combination in question is one of the most beautiful in chess history and even the great Tigran Petrosian comments that when he first came across it he was so impressed that he forever remained a devotee of chess! This survey is based on articles by Tim Krabbé (*Chess Curiosities*; 1985) and Jan Timman (*New In Chess Magazine*; 1997/3, 1997/5 and 1999/5).

(118) Tylkowski – Wojciechowski
Poznan 1931
Bird's Opening [A03]

1.f4 d5 2.e3 c5 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.♗b5 ♗g4 5.0-0 e6 6.d3 ♗e7 7.♘c3 d4 8.♘b1 ♘f6 9.e4 0-0 10.♗×c6 b×c6 11.c3 d×c3 12.♘×c3

♗×f3 13.♖×f3 ♘g4 14.♔h1 ♕d4 15.♕g1 ♕×g1+ 16.♔×g1 ♗d8 17.♗e3 ♘×e3 18.♖×e3 ♗b6 19.♖d1 h6 20.e5 f6 21.e×f6 ♖×f6 22.♖f3 c4+ 23.d4 c5 24.d5 e×d5 25.♖×d5 ♔h7 26.♖d7 ♖d8 27.♖b7 ♖g6 28.♖g3 ♖×g3 29.h×g3 (D)



The start of the combination is easy to predict; Black has to put pressure on the white pawns.

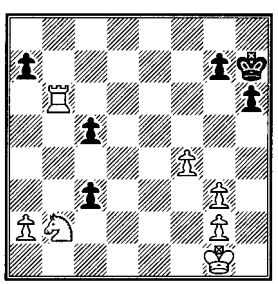
29...♖d2! 30.♘a4?

Wrong, as White could not even conceive of what would follow. He could save the draw with 30.a4! ♖×b2 31.a5 ♖b3! (after 31...♗×a5? 32.♖×b2 ♗×c3 33.♖c2 ♗d4+ 34.♔f1 c3 35.g4 it is not clear if Black can draw) 32.a×b6 a×b6! 33.♘a4 (33.♘d5 c3 34.f5! ♔g8 [34...h5 35.♘e3 ♖b2 36.f6 ♔g8 37.♖×g7+ ♔f8 38.♖b7 ♖e2 39.♖b8+ ♔f7 40.♖b7+ ♔f8=] 35.♖b8± is good as well) 33...♖a3 34.♖×b6 ♖×a4 35.♖b5.

30...♖×b2!!

The main theme and the actual start of the combination.

31.♘×b2 c3 32.♖×b6 (D)



Forced. If 32.♘d3, then 32...c4+ 33.♖×b6 c×d3 and the black pawns are unstoppable.

32...c4!!

Taking d3 under control. The threat now is ...c2.

33.♖b4 a5!!

The conclusion of the combination. The white pieces lose their coordination and the c-pawn will promote.

34.♘×c4

If 34.♖×c4, then 34...c×b2 35.a4 b1♕+ 36.♔h2 ♕b3−+.

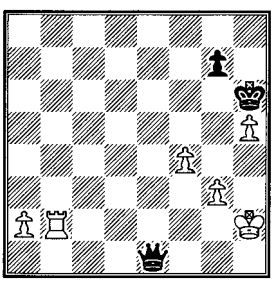
34...c2 35.♘×a5 c1♕+ 36.♔h2 ♕c5!

Black wins the knight. It is not clear that Black had foreseen this beforehand, but luck favors the brave!

37.♖b2

The point is that after 37.♖a4 (37.♖b3 ♕×a5 38.a3? ♕h5+ 39.♔g1 ♕d1+) Black wins with 37...♕h5+ 38.♔g1 ♕d1+.

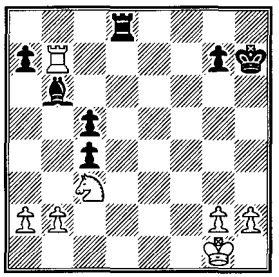
37...♕×a5 38.g4 ♕e1 39.g3 h5 40.g×h5 ♔h6 (D)



And after fifteen more moves White resigned. **0-1**

Two years later and in a far-away town and in an era that there were no publications (almost), databases or internet (!), a similar combination took place. This is the version that it was published in some sources:

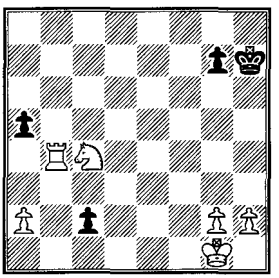
(119) Ortueta – Sanz
Madrid 1933 (D)



1...♖d2! 2.♘a4?!

But here White could save himself with 2.a4! ♖×b2 3.a5 ♖b3 4.a×b6 a×b6 5.♘a4 ♖a3 (5...b5? 6.♘×c5 ♖b1+ 7.♔f2 c3 8.♘d3+−) 6.♖×b6 ♖×a4 7.♖b5=.

2...♖×b2! 3.♘×b2 c3 4.♖×b6 c4!! 5.♖b4 a5!! 6.♘×c4 c2 (D)



"And White resigned." It looks like White is busted, but actually there is a defense:

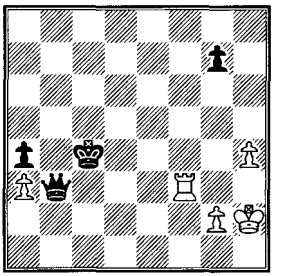
7.♖b3! c1♕+ 8.♔f2 ♕×c4 9.♖h3+

The saving move. If the white h-pawn were on h3, then White would lose this position.

9...♔g6 10.a3

Here John Nunn thought that Black could win by taking his pawn to a4, his king to c4 and then liquidating into a winning pawn ending. But this is not true, as White can defend:

10...a4 11.♖g3+ ♔f5 12.♖f3+ ♔e4 13.♔g3 ♔d5 14.h4! ♕b3 15.♔h3 ♔c4 16.♔h2 (D)



And Black has no way to improve his position further:

16...♕×f3 17.g×f3 ♔b3

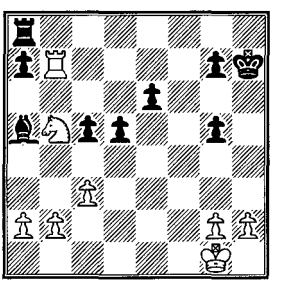
White simply advances his pawns and reaches a drawn queen ending:

18.f4 ♔×a3 19.f5 ♔b3 20.f6 g×f6 21.h5 a3 22.h6 a2 23.h7 a1♕ 24.h8♕ ½-½

But "of course" this was the "wrong version" of the game. The following was the actual game:

(120) Ortueta – Sanz
Madrid 1933
French Defense [C00]

1.e4 e6 2.d3 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 ♘fd7 5.f4 ♗b4 6.♗d2 0-0 7.♘f3 f6 8.d4 c5 9.♘b5 f×e5 10.d×e5 ♖×f4 11.c3 ♖e4+ 12.♗e2 ♗a5 13.0-0 ♘×e5 14.♘×e5 ♖×e5 15.♗f4 ♖f5 16.♗d3 ♖f6 17.♕c2 h6 18.♗e5 ♘d7 19.♗×f6 ♘×f6 20.♖×f6 ♕×f6 21.♖f1 ♕e7 22.♗h7+ ♔h8 23.♕g6 ♗d7 24.♖f7 ♕g5 25.♕×g5 h×g5 26.♖×d7 ♔×h7 27.♖×b7 (D)



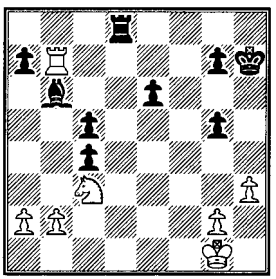
27...♗b6?!

According to Capablanca, here Black could get the advantage with 27...c4!. But in fact this is of less significance as it has nothing to do with our theme.

28.c4 d×c4 29.♘c3?!

29.♘d6! was a far better try; probably White would be able to draw.

29...♖d8 30.h3 (D)



As more or less in the previous game!

30...♖d2! 31.♘a4

Now Black's extra material on the kingside doesn't allow the saving resource 31.a4: 31...♖×b2 32.a5 ♖b3 33.a×b6 a×b6 34.♘a4 c3 35.♘×c3 ♖×c3 36.♖×b6 ♖e3−+.

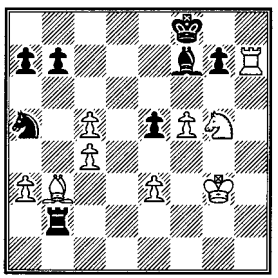
31...♖×b2!!

As usual, imagination wins versus material!

32.♘×b2 c3! 33.♖×b6 c4!! 34.♖b4 a5!! 35.♘×c4 c2 0-1

This combination inspired the great Jan Timman to construct some thematic studies:

(121) Timman 1997 (D)

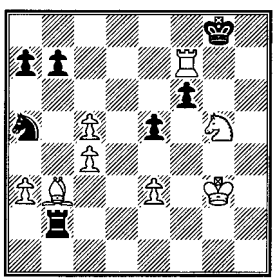


White is a pawn-up but his queenside has problems, so he has to act.

1.f6! g×f6

Forced. If 1...♖×b3, then 2.♖h8+ ♗g8 3.f7 and if 1...♗g8, White wins with 2.f×g7+ ♔e7 3.♖h8 ♖×b3 4.♖×g8 ♔f6 5.♘e6!.

2.♖×f7+ ♔g8 (D)



Not of course 2...♔e8? in view of 3.♗a4+.

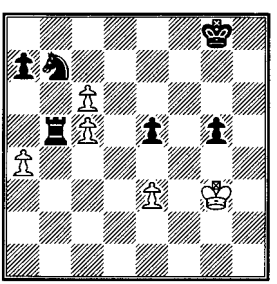
3.♖×b7!! ♘×b7?

Here the main problem is Boris Gelfand's analysis, which states that Black can defend with 3...f×g5! 4.♖×a7 ♖×b3 5.♖×a5 ♖×e3+ 6.♔g4 ♔f7. So, actually the study is incorrect but still beautiful because of the various combinations and defenses.

4.c6 ♖×b3 5.c5!!

The well-known theme. With this move, the black pieces are kept away from d6 and b6.

5...♖b5 6.a4!! f×g5! (D)



The best defense, as Black has a hidden resource...

7.♔h3!!

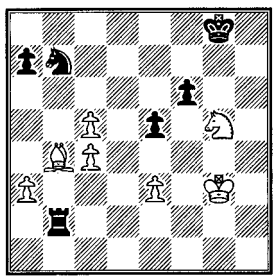
The point is that 7.a×b5? is impossible in view of 7...♘×c5 8.c7 ♘e4+ 9.♔g4 ♘d6−+. White's last move is an enormous surprise. Although a rook and a knight down, White is in no hurry to win material back, but starts by hiding his king!

7...g4+ 8.♔h4!

And White wins the ensuing queen ending: 8...g3 9.a×b5 g2 10.c×b7 g1♕ 11.b8♕+ **1-0**

The following version is also more economical and therefore the improved and correct one:

(122) Timman 1999 (D)



1.c6 ♖×b4 2.c5!!

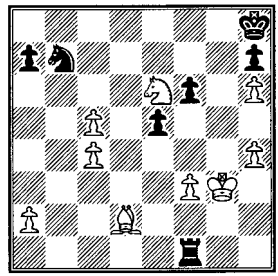
It is a draw after 2.a×b4? ♘d6 3.c5 ♘f5+ 4.♔g4 ♘×e3+ 5.♔f3 ♘d5 6.♘e6 ♔f7 7.c7 ♘e7 8.♘d8+ ♔e8 9.♘c6 ♘c8.

2...♖b5 3.a4!! f×g5 4.♔h3!! g4+ 5.♔h4!

And White wins as in the previous version. **1-0**

As Jan Timman states, he was not entirely satisfied with the two previous studies, a clear indication of a dedicated and great chessplayer! So, his final, third version is far more excellent and refined compared to the previous two, which might have seemed "unfinished."

(123) Timman 1999 (D)



As far as material is concerned, the situation is roughly equal. White is obviously counting on his passed c-pawns.

1.♗b4!

1.c6 ♘d6 at once yields nothing, so White will have to start by trying to dominate the enemy knight.

1...♖b1

There is no other defense to the threatened 2.c6: 1...♖g1+ 2.♔f2 ♖g8 (2...♖c1 3.c6 ♖×c4 4.c7 ♖c6 5.f4 e4 6.f5+−) 3.c6 ♘d8 4.♗e7!+−.

2.a3!

Tempting is 2.c6 ♖×b4 3.c5, but this fails to 3...♘×c5 4.c7 ♘e4+! 5.f×e4 ♖c4.

2...a5 3.c6

Only now can the bishop be sacrificed.

3...a×b4 4.c5!!

The usual motif.

4...b×a3

4...♘×c5 fails to 5.c7 ♘e4+ 6.f×e4 ♖c1 7.a×b4 and a white pawn will promote.

5.c7

Now the black rook has to hurry back to the last rank to stop the white passed pawns.

5...♖g1+ 6.♔h3!

For two reasons, both of which will become apparent, the only good square for the king.

6...♖g8

Another try is 6...a2 7.c8♕+ ♖g8

which fails to 8.♘d8!! ♘×d8 (8...♖×d8 9.♕×b7 a1♕ 10.♕g7#; 8...a1♕ 9.♘f7#) 9.♕a6, capturing the a-pawn.

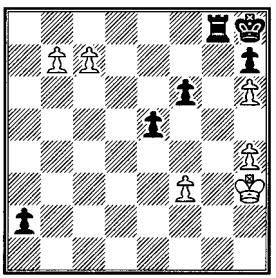
7.♘d8! ♖×d8 8.c6!

Here is our theme again! Now we see why the king had to go on h3; on the second rank, a check on d2 would be annoying.

8...♖g8

The best defense. If 8...a2, then 9.c×d8♕+ ♘×d8 10.c7.

9.c×b7 a2 (D)



10.b8♕!

This is the only way to queen which wins, as will soon become clear. The alternative 10.c8♕? only draws after 10...a1♕ 11.♕×g8+ ♔×g8 12.b8♕+ ♔f7 13.♕c7+ ♔e6.

10...a1♕ 11.♕×g8+ ♔×g8 12.c8♕+ ♔f7 13.♕d7+ ♔g6

The other option, 13...♔f8, also loses: 14.♕g7+ ♔e8 15.♕g8+ ♔d7 16.♕×h7+ ♔d6 17.♕e4+−.

14.♕g7+ ♔h5 15.♕f7+!

And this is the second reason for White's sixth move; the white king assists in weaving a mating net!

15...♔×h6 16.♕×f6+ ♔h5 17.♕g5# 1-0

Conclusion

The well-known Prokes theme in the studies is in full force in the above examples. Combinations can be learned and classified, as they tend to recur...

Well, everything is new if well forgotten, so this survey was a good chance to come back to interesting and old combinations, mixed with relatively recent studies. Both amusing and instructive...

The f4 Break

Concept

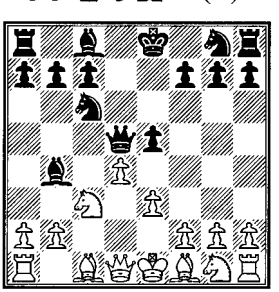
The f4 (...f5) break in general looks like an easy concept, as it can be seen in a vast number of games. This of course is self-evident and we will not argue! But here we will examine the case when the f4-break is fully restricted by the black e5- and g5-pawns and it does not have the support of its g3-pawn. In this rare case, a sacrifice of a piece is in the wind and the justification can come in different forms of compensation. The most usual is the opponent's king but, other strategic and tactical assets could also be taken into account. But let's look at more examples to fully understand this concept:

(124) Grivas – Poluektov
Limmasol 1997
Chigorin Defense [D07]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 ♘c6 3.c×d5 ♕×d5 4.e3

I think this is one of the best setups against the Chigorin Defense. 4.♘f3 ♗g4 gives Black too many options.

4...e5 5.♘c3 ♗b4 (D)



6.♗d2

Also good is 6.a3 ♗×c3+ 7.b×c3 ♘f6 8.♘e2 0-0 (8...h5 9.c4! ♕×c4? 10.♘f4 ♕c3+ 11.♗d2 ♕b2 12.♘d3 ♕b6 13.♖b1 ♕a6 14.♘c5 ♕×a3 15.♖a1 ♕b2 16.♘a4+− Grivas-Miladinovic, Athens 2000) 9.c4 ♕d6 10.d5 ♘e7 11.♘c3 c6 12.e4 a6 (12...b5!? was my suggestion in a survey that I wrote for *ChessBase Magazine*) 13.a4± Grivas-Karpatchev, Corfu 2007.

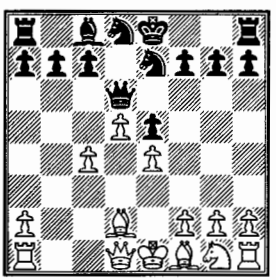
6...♗×c3 7.b×c3

White plays for a strong center and/or the bishop pair. 7.♗×c3 e×d4 8.♘e2 is the modern line, but I believe that Black doesn't stand badly.

7...♘ge7

The main alternative is 7...e×d4 8.c×d4 ♘f6 9.♘f3 0-0 10.♗e2 ♘e4 (10...b6 11.♕b3 ♕×b3 12.a×b3 ♗b7 13.0-0 a5 14.♖fc1± Grivas-Tsantiris, Athens 1997) 11.0-0 a5 12.♕c2 ♘d6 13.♖fc1± Grivas-Karagiannis, Kavala 1999. Black has also tried 7...♕d6 8.♘e2 ♘f6 9.♘g3 0-0 10.♗e2 ♘e7 11.0-0± c5?! 12.d×e5! ♕×e5 13.f3! ♘ed5 14.♕c1 ♕e7 15.e4 ♘c7 16.a4 ♗d7 17.♗f4 ♖fc8 18.♖d1± ♘ce8? 19.e5 1-0 Grivas-Rama, Athens 1995.

8.c4 ♕d6 9.d5 ♘d8 10.e4 (D)



10...c5?!

It was wiser to try to find a good post for the unlucky d8-knight: 10...b6!? 11.♘e2 ♘b7 12.♘c3 0-0 13.♗e2±.

11.♘e2 ♗d7 12.♘g3 g6 13.♗d3 f6?!

Another passive move. For better or worse, Black had to try 13...f5 14.e×f5 g×f5 15.0-0 ♘f7 16.♖b1 0-0-0 17.♗c3±.

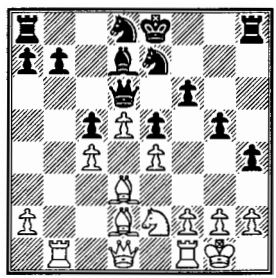
14.♖b1 h5

Black believes that he can push White's pieces back and avoid any opening of the center...

15.0-0 h4 16.♘e2

Now White is ready for the f4-break; Black decides to stop it "forever"...

16...g5 (D)



Black has chosen an unusual opening set-up. He has decided to keep the position closed, neutralizing White's bishop pair and he also has ideas such as placing one of his knights on d6 and the other one on f4, which looks very promising. Although White seems to be on top as he enjoys a well-protected passed pawn, the bishop pair and a significant spatial advantage, there is the question of how to proceed. So, in summary, White's advantages are quite valuable and he should try to benefit in a direct way.

17.f4!!

A sacrifice like the text comes into consideration. White's bishop pair comes to life, his passed pawn is ready to advance and the black king will come under fire. Of course he will be a piece down, but all his remaining pieces will be active and ready to exploit the pres-

ence of his opponent's king on the center. In view of the above, his compensation should be more than enough.

17...g×f4

17...e×f4 18.♘×f4! is not much different.

18.♘×f4 b6

Black declines the offer, as after 18...e×f4 19.♗×f4 ♕a6 20.e5 h3 (20...f5 21.e6 ♘×e6 22.d×e6 ♗×e6 23.♕f3 0-0-0 24.♖fe1 ±; 20...f×e5 21.♗×e5 ♖f8 [21...♕h6 22.♗×h8 ♕×h8 23.♕f3 +–] 22.♖×f8+ ♔×f8 23.♕h5 ♘f7 24.♖f1 +–) 21.g3 ♕×a2 (21...f5 22.♕e2 ♖h7 23.e6 +–) 22.♖f2 ♕a6 23.e×f6 ♕×f6 24.♗c1! ♕d6 25.♗b2 White is almost winning. Nevertheless, as declining the sacrifice does not improve Black's position, he should have accepted it and put the onus on White to prove its correctness. In such cases, although not quite pleasant, it is better to play with material in hand than nothing at all!

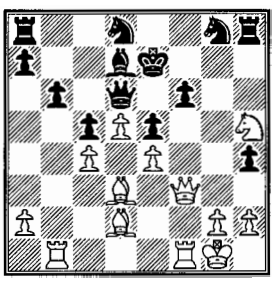
19.♘h5

The open f-file and the attacking white pieces ensure the win.

19...♘g8 20.♕f3

20.♘g7+ ♔f7 21.♘f5 ♗×f5 22.♖×f5 ♘c6 23.♕g4 ♘d4 24.♖h5 +– was good as well.

20...♔e7 (D)



Black's position isn't exactly a work of art, but he should at least try to survive with 20...♘f7 although after 21.♘×f6+ ♕×f6 22.♕×f6 ♘×f6 23.♖×f6 ♔e7 24.♖bf1 ♖af8 25.♗e2 he will probably not.

21.♗g5!! ♖×h5

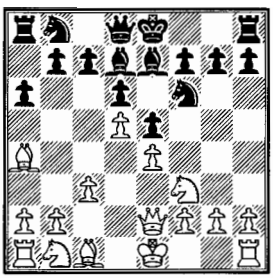
21...f×g5?! 22.♕f8# or 21...♘f7 22.♗×h4 ♖h6 23.♖b2 ♖f8 24.♖bf2 was hardly welcome.

22.♕×h5 f×g5 23.♕h7+! 1-0

The above example was nice, but I think that even nicer is the next one:

(125) Svidler – Malaniuk
Maikop 1998
Ruy Lopez [C75]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 d6 5.c3 ♗d7 6.d4 ♘f6 7.♕e2 ♗e7 8.d5 ♘b8 (D)



9.♗c2

To exchange on d7 or not to exchange on d7 – that is the question. In general, keeping pieces on the board benefits the player with the spatial advantage. In this position White has more space for his pieces because of his forward post on d5. But on the other hand, his light-square bishop is Black's good bishop. For a similar discussion, see the games Topalov-Yusupov, Novgorod 1995 and Tischbierek-Sale, Budapest 1996. So, the alternative is 9.♗×d7+ ♘b×d7 10.c4 0-0 11.♘c3 ♘e8 12.g4 (12.0-0 g6 13.♗h6 ♘g7 14.♕d2 f5 15.♘g5 ± Cimra-Kovacova, Slovakia 1993) 12...c5 13.♗e3 ♕a5 14.0-0-0 ♖b8 15.♕c2 b5 16.♘d2 ♕c7 17.h4 ± Cimra-Kovacova, Slovakia 1994.

9...c6 10.c4 a5 11.♘c3 ♘a6 12.0-0 0-0 13.h3

A useful move; White restricts an eventual ...♗g4×f3 exchange – he is the one with more space!

13...h6 14.♗e3 c5

Black goes for a complete blockade.

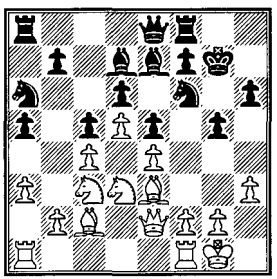
15.♘e1!

The knight belongs on d3; from there it will support the two main breaks for White, b4 and f4.

15...g5?

A dangerous decision since the blockade is a bit fragile. Better was 15...♘h7 16.f4 ♗f6 (16...e×f4 17.♗×f4 +=) 17.f5 ±.

16.a3 ♔g7 17.♘d3 ♕e8 (D)



18.f4!

Drastic and good. Black is not well-organized to withstand White's attack. The slow 18.♔h2?! (with the idea g3 and f4) 18...♘c7 19.g3 ♕c8! ∞ would only help Black.

18...g×f4 19.♘×f4 ♖h8

Here again, accepting the piece doesn't help: 19...e×f4 20.♗×f4 ♖h8 21.e5± and Black is in trouble. His extra piece is not good even for passive defense.

20.♖f2?!

20.♘h5+ is good enough: 20...♘×h5 21.♕×h5 f6 22.♕h4 +–.

20...e×f4

Black sooner or later had to accept the sacrifice...

21.♗×f4 ♘h7 22.e5!

Now the "monster" on c2 enters the battle with lethal threats for the black king.

22...♗h4

Black's defense is going nowhere: 22...♗g5 23.♖af1 (23.♗h2!?) 23...♗×f4 24.♖×f4 ♘g5 (24...♖f8 25.e6 +–) 25.h4 d×e5 (25...♕×e5 26.h×g5 ♖af8 27.♕f3 ♕e7 28.♘e4 +–) 26.♖4f2 ♘h7 27.♖×f7+ ♕×f7 28.♖×f7+ ♔×f7 29.♕h5++–.

23.e6! f×e6

The alternatives were 23...♗×f2+ 24.♕×f2 f×e6 25.♕g3+ +- and 23...♗×e6 24.d×e6 ♗×f2+ 25.♕×f2 ♕×e6 26.♕g3+ ♘g5 27.h4 +–.

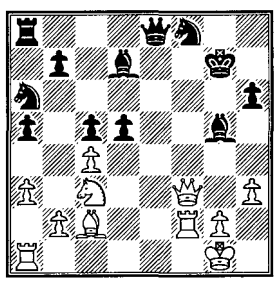
24.♕g4+ ♗g5 25.♗×d6 e×d5 26.♕f3

26.♗e5+ also wins: 26...♕×e5 27.♕×d7+ ♕e7 28.♕f5 ♕f6 29.♕×d5 ♕e7 30.♕d3 ♕e6 31.♘d5 +–.

26...♖f8

Desperation: 26...d4 27.♗e5+ ♔g8 28.♘d5 ♗c6 29.h4! +–; 26...♗f6 27.♕g3+ ♗g5 28.♘×d5 +–; 26...♗e3 27.♗e5+! +–.

27.♗×f8+ ♘×f8 (D)



28.♘×d5

White wins, as Black's pieces on the queenside are not contributing to the defense...

28...♗e6 29.♖e1

Simpler was 29.♖af1 ♗×d5 30.♕c3+! ♔g8 31.♖×f8+ ♕×f8 32.♖×f8+ ♖×f8 33.c×d5 +–.

29...♕c6 30.♕c3+ ♔g8 31.♕g3

31.♘f6+! ♗×f6 32.♖×f6 ♕d7 33.♖e3!+−

31...♗×d5 32.c×d5 ♕c7

32...♕×d5 33.h4+−

33.d6 ♕g7 34.♔h2

34.♕b3+ ♔h8 35.♖f7 ♕d4+ 36.♔h1 was curtains. Although White missed various quick wins, his position is so good that he could not avoid winning!

34...c4 35.h4

And Black finally resigned in view of 35...♗d8 36.♖×f8+! ♔×f8 37.♖e8+ ♔f7 38.♕f3+ ♔×e8 39.♗a4+ ♕d7 40.♕h5+ ♔f8 41.♗×d7+−. This was a fine effort by Peter Svidler. His opening setup proven to be very effective after the slightly surprising break on the kingside. The attack was crisp and beautiful. **1-0**

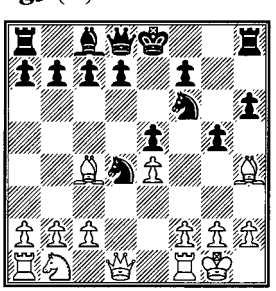
A theoretical, cruel discussion is next:

(126) Ramos – Gutierrez
Vila Nova de Gaia 2010
Giuoco Piano [C55]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗c4 ♗c5 4.0-0 ♘f6 5.d4 ♗×d4

5...e×d4 is possible and well-known: 6.e5 d5 7.e×f6 d×c4 8.f×g7 ♖g8∞ Short-Fressinet, Khanty Mansiysk 2010.

6.♘×d4 ♘×d4 7.♗g5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 (D)



9.f4!

A nice, active continuation, which engulfs the board in flames.

9...g×f4?

Black is not well prepared for this extremely aggressive variation. He should opt for 9...d5 10.e×d5 ♘×d5 11.f×e5 g×h4 12.♕×d4 ♗e6 13.♘c3 ♘b6 14.♕×d8+ ♖×d8 15.♗×e6 f×e6± Rouffignac-Feryn, La Fere 2010. 9...g×h4?! 10.f×e5± also doesn't help.

10.♖×f4!

A killing sacrifice – after the pawn, the rook is sacrificed on f4!

10...e×f4

There is no serious alternative to save Black: 10...♘e2+ 11.♗×e2 e×f4 12.e5 (12.♕d4 c5 13.♕×f6 ♕×f6 14.♗×f6 0-0 15.♘c3 ♖e8 16.♖f1 b5 17.♖×f4 a6 18.♘d5 ♖b8 19.♖g4+ ♔f8 20.♗g7+ ♔g8 21.♘f6# 1-0 Akhrass-Taha, Beirut 2009) 12...♕e7 13.e×f6 ♕c5+ 14.♗f2 ♕g5 15.h4 ♕a5 16.♗b5 ♔d8 17.♘c3 c6 18.♕d6 ♖e8 19.♖e1 ♖×e1+ 20.♗×e1 ♕b6+ 21.♗f2 ♕a5 22.a3 h5 1-0 Nozdrachev-Polyakov, Moscow 2009.

11.♕×d4 c5

Now 11...d5 came late in the game Rogers-Machalova, Znojmo 1999: 12.♗×f6 ♕d6 13.♗×d5+−.

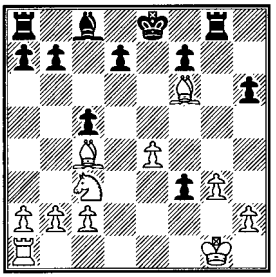
12.♕×f6

Taking black's king central position into account, White should go in for 12.♕c3 ♖g8 13.♗×f6 ♕c7 14.♘a3 a6 15.♗d5+−. But of course the text also wins.

12...♕×f6 13.♗×f6 ♖g8 14.♘c3 f3 15.g3 (D)

Game over!

15...♖g6 16.e5 d6 17.♖d1 ♗f5 18.♖×d6 ♗×c2 19.♘d5 ♔f8 20.♘f4 ♖g8 21.♖d7 b5 22.♗d5



♖c8 23.♖×f7+ ♔e8 24.♖e7+ ♔f8 25.♘e6# 1-0

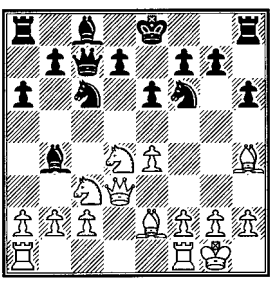
And finally, a game where the f4-break turned out not to save or sacrifice material, but to win some material instantly!

(127) Hou – Sharevich
Khanty Mansiysk 2010
Sicilian Defense [B41]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 a6 5.♗e2 ♘f6 6.♘c3 ♕c7 7.0-0 ♗b4 8.♕d3 ♘c6 9.♗g5 h6

It seems that met more often is 9...♘×d4 10.♕×d4 ♗c5 11.♕d2 b5 12.♗f4 e5 13.♘d5 ♘×d5 14.♕×d5 ♗b7 15.♕×e5+ ♕×e5 16.♗×e5 0-0 17.♖fd1 ♗×e4 18.♗d6 ♗×d6 ½-½ Brkic-Smirin, Rijeka 2010.

10.♗h4!? (D)



A new move. 10.♗×f6 g×f6 11.♖ad1 h5 12.♔h1 ♘×d4 13.♕×d4 ♗e7 14.f4 b5∞ Shirov-Ivanchuk, Tallinn 1996.

10...♕d6?!

Going for mass exchanges down the d-file is not the proper way – Black's d-pawn will be under pressure.

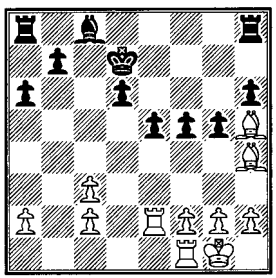
11.♖ad1 ♘×d4 12.♕×d4 ♕×d4 13.♖×d4 ♗×c3 14.b×c3 e5 15.♖d3

Also not bad was 15.♗×f6 e×d4 (15...g×f6 16.♖d6±) 16.♗×g7 ♖g8 17.♗×d4±.

15...♘×e4?!

Or 15...g5 16.♗g3 ♘×e4 17.♗×e5 0-0 18.♗d4±. Black should think of counter-chances: 15...g5 16.♗g3 d6!? 17.♖×d6 ♘×e4 18.♗×e5 ♘×d6 19.♗×h8 ♗e6±.

16.♖e3 d6 17.♖×e4 f5 18.♗h5+ ♔d7 19.♖e2 g5 (D)



This was Black's mini-combination, as she now regains the piece and it seems that her position is not that bad...

20.f4!

But not so! White wins material and her rooks become active, but the most important factor is the weak black king.

20...g×h4 21.f×e5 d×e5 22.♖×f5 ♔c7 23.♖f7+ ♔d6

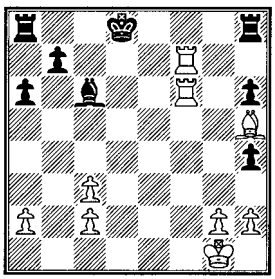
Further material will be lost after 23...♔b8: 24.♖×e5 ♖d8 25.♗f3 ♔a7 26.♖h5 +-.

24.♖f6+ ♔c7 25.♖×e5 ♗d7 26.♖e7 ♔d8?!

Black hurries to unpin. A move like 26...♖af8 leads to a lost pawn ending: 27.♖×f8 ♖×f8 28.♗g4 ♖d8 29.♔f2 ♔d6

30.♖×d7+ ♖×d7 31.♗×d7 ♔×d7 32.♔f3+−. Black only chance was 26...♖ad8 27.♗f3±.

27.♖ef7 ♗c6 (D)



28.♗f3!

After the exchange of Black's only active piece, the white rooks will dominate the board. This is what I call technique in converting the advantage to the full point!

28...♗×f3 29.♖×f3 b5 30.♖3f6 ♔e8 31.♖g7 h5 32.h3!

Fixing one of the targets!

32...♔d8 33.c4! b×c4

Now all Black's pawns are weak and her rooks are all still on their initial squares!

34.♖c6

Time to collect material.

34...a5 35.♖×c4 ♖a6 36.♖×h4 ♖hh6 37.♖f4 ♖hf6 38.♖×f6 ♖×f6 39.♖g5 ♖c6 40.♖×h5 a4 41.♖a5 ♖c4 42.♖a7 ♔c8 43.a3!

The last finesse!

43...♔b8 44.♖f7 ♖c3 45.♖f3! 1-0

Conclusion

A good chessplayer should work logic and fantasy into his thinking. In reality, if you dig deep enough, you find that fantasy is but extended logic. Moves as in the above examples (f4) do not look logical first sight, but could be the strongest in the position and so, then become the most logical! Keep your mind open and try to discover moves that our chess "logic" does not accept at once. "Logic" is never to be found in our eyes, but in our brains!

Planning

Concept

The most important element in modern chess practice is probably correct planning. The plan is associated with judgment and execution, valuable concepts that cannot be separated and which, most of the time, determine the fate of our positions. Nowadays, chess games between decent players are full of small plans of different types and ideas, based on purely strategic and tactical motives. The one who will judge, plan and execute better than the opponent earns the right to win the game. A closer examination of games played between strong players will prove that there is some harmony among their moves, some central idea that guide the movements of their forces. This is what we call a *plan.*

A good chessplayer refuses to act without any plan, even if this plan sometimes turns out to be mistaken in the long run. First of all, it is important to identify the most important strategic and tactical elements of each particular position. According to the needs of that position, we should create our plan and stick to it. Games where only one plan is used are rarely seen these days. We are usually obliged to create several small plans, which of course are just parts of our main design: winning!

Many weak players are not able to construct an acceptable plan. This has nothing to do with intelligence, but just with basic education. Nowadays, with so many books, electronic

help and trainers available, anything can be learned and, by constant practice, it can be understood and assimilated. Without basic education and knowledge we can't go very far. So, the first step is to understand the basic strategic and tactical elements that govern our royal game.

Then, it is time to learn about judgment, planning and execution. If we can practice all of the above properly, we are ready to climb the (chess) mountain of Olympus. Plans are necessary and can be found in every phase of a chess game. From the early opening to the late endgame, chessplayers create the necessary plans, derived from as varied factors as the occupation of an important square to a violent attack.

More usual are the plans we draw right after the end of the opening phase, but this is of course not always the rule. Nowadays, with opening theory having gone very far, the choice of a certain opening very much depends on a plan we would like to use!

Some general advice could be presented to the reader as follows:

1. Notice and understand the main merits and disadvantages of each side (judgment).

2. Notice the immediate threats of both sides, but especially of your opponent!

3. Determine what is (are) the main, most significant target(s) and how the plan should be executed.

4. Examine what might be the opponent's reaction to your plan.

5. Examine what your opponent's possible main plan is (could be) and how you should react to it.

6. If you can choose among two or more good plans, select the one that you think can bring more benefits.

7. Follow your plan. Do not change it without a really good reason.

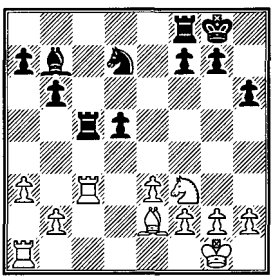
Three important examples on judgment, planning and execution follows:

(128) Ivanchuk – Aronian
Linares 2007
Queen's Gambit Declined [D38]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.♗g5 ♘bd7 6.c×d5 e×d5 7.♕c2 c5 8.a3 ♗×c3+ 9.♕×c3 h6 10.♗×f6 ♕×f6 11.e3 0-0 12.♗e2 b6 13.0-0 ♗b7

The position is characteristic for the Tartakower-Makagonov-Bondarevsky variation of the Queen's Gambit Declined. The main differences are that in the Queen's Gambit Declined, the queens find themselves in opposition on the a3-e7 diagonal, and the black bishop is developed slightly more actively on e6.

14.♖fc1 ♖ac8 15.d×c5 ♕×c3 16.♖×c3 ♖×c5 (D)



Black cannot maintain the compactness of his structure with 16...b×c5 because of 17.b4, ensuring White the control of the d4-square. The point behind Ivanchuk's novelty is revealed after 17...c×b4 18.♖×c8 ♖×c8 19.a×b4± when the queen's rook is ideally placed on its initial square. Here White has to find a plan to maximize his chances of success.

17.♖cc1!

A paradoxical move and an impressive plan! White is not sufficiently well prepared to fight for the control of the c-file with 17.♖ac1 because of 17...♖fc8 when 18.♖×c5 b×c5 19.b4 c×b4 leads to simplification and a probable draw, in spite of Black's isolated pawn. One general rule states that the side playing against the isolani should keep as many major pieces on board and try to provoke the exchange of minor pieces, in order to successfully attack the relative weakness of the central pawn. From this perspective, Ivanchuk's willing retreat is easy to understand, but still very difficult to play it over the board.

17...♖fc8?!

Obviously missing White's idea. Safer would have been 17...♖×c1+! 18.♖×c1 ♖c8 with a defensible position for Black. As said before, major pieces should be exchanged!

18.♖d1!

Of course. Black's activity along the c-file will have a temporary character, while the pressure against the d5-pawn will be permanent.

18...♖c2 19.♗b5 ♘f8 20.♖ab1!

Now White is ready to kick the black rook out of his camp, leaving the black rooks nothing to do on the c-file.

20...♖2c7 21.♗a4 ♘e6 22.♗b3

And the light-square bishop also gets an optimal position on b3, putting pressure on the isolated black d-pawn.

22...♔f8 23.h3!

Another interesting moment. White could win the weak pawn with 23.♗×d5 ♗×d5 24.♖×d5 but after 24...♖c1+ 25.♖d1 ♖×d1+ 26.♖×d1 ♖c2 27.♖b1 ♔e7 Black would have full compensation and there seems to be no way for White to improve his position. Ivanchuk prefers to strengthen his position and wait for the right moment to grab this pawn – this is another instructive moment.

23...♖c5 24.♔h2 ♔e7 25.♖d2!

Doubling the rooks on the d-file is a natural follow-up.

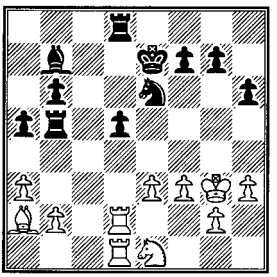
25...♖b5 26.♗a2 ♖bc5 27.♘e1!

Covering the c2-entrance.

27...a5

Unfortunately Black cannot exchange rooks yet: 27...♖c1 28.♖×c1 ♖×c1 29.♘d3 ♖a1 30.♘b4 ±.

28.♖bd1 ♖d8 29.♔g3 ♖b5 30.f3 (D)



White has a pleasant position, but is still a long way from achieving something more tangible.

30...♖c8?

Rather careless. Black should have brought the other rook to safety with 30...♖c5.

31.♘d3!

Suddenly, the rook is trapped. The threat a4 is hard to prevent in an adequate way.

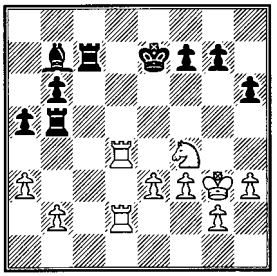
31...d4

Other moves also lose this pawn, for instance 31...a4 32.♘b4 ♘c7 33.e4 when 33...d×e4 34.♖d7+ leads to a devastating attack, or 31...♘c5 32.♘f4 ♘a4 33.♗×d5 ♗×d5 34.♘×d5+ when the central knight compensates for the pressure against the b2-pawn.

32.♗×e6 ♔×e6

Or 32...f×e6 33.e×d4 ♗d5 34.h4±.

33.♘f4+ ♔e7 34.♖×d4 ♖c7 35.♖1d2 (D)



White is basically winning now, but Black went down rather quickly, possibly demoralized by the unexpected course of events.

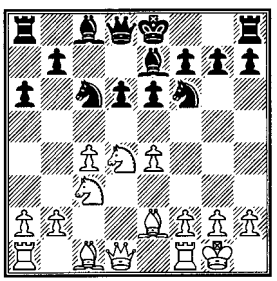
35...♖bc5 36.e4 ♖c4 37.♖d6 ♖4c6 38.e5 ♖c2 39.♖×c2 ♖×c2 40.♖×b6 ♗c6 41.b4 g5 42.♘h5 a×b4 43.a×b4 ♗d5 44.♘g7 ♖e2 45.♘f5+ ♔e8 46.♘×h6 ♗e6 47.♖b5 ♖b2 48.♖b8+ ♔d7 49.♖g8 1-0

(129) Zvjaginsev – Pelletier

Panormo 2001

Sicilian Defense [B28]

1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 c5 3.♘f3 e6 4.e4 ♘c6 5.♗e2 a6 6.0-0 d6 7.d4 c×d4 8.♘×d4 ♗e7 (D)



A well-known position, in which different moves have been tried, with the most often met being 9.♗e3.

9.♕d3!?

A very interesting plan. White wants to transfer his queen directly to attack on g3, so he avoids closing the route with 9.♗e3. In a way, this doesn't look like an extremely important plan to present here, but I believe that it shows the original way of thinking of a strong grandmaster and the way a serious chess game is developed.

9...0-0 10.♘×c6 b×c6 11.♕g3

Now White wants to provoke ...g6, as then the advance f4-f5 would be stronger. Black has to react carefully.

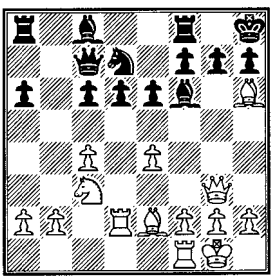
11...♘d7?!

This weakens the d-pawn. Black should opt for 11...♖e8±.

12.♗h6 ♗f6 13.♖ad1 ♕c7 14.♖d2!

White simple reinforces the pressure on the d-file. Wrong would be the seemingly strong 14.c5? ♘×c5 15.♖×d6 in view of 15...♘b7 16.♖d3 ♕×g3 17.♖×g3 ♗e5 18.f4 ♗d4+ 19.♔h1 ♔h8 20.♗g5 f6 21.♗h4 e5=.

14...♔h8 (D)



15.♗g5!

Another good move. Exchanging the dark-square bishops ensures the weakness of the black d-pawn.

15...♗e5?!

Good or bad, Black had to submit to a passive position with 15...♗×g5 16.♕×g5 f6 17.♕g3 ♘e5 18.♖fd1 ♖b8 (18...♘f7? 19.c5!+–) 19.b3 ♖d8 although after 20.♗h5!±, with the idea f4, and White stands clearly better.

16.f4 ♗×c3 17.♕×c3 f6

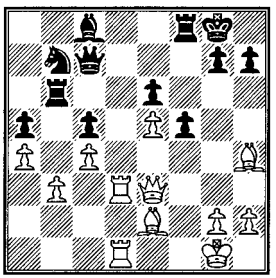
18.♗h4 ♘c5 19.♕d4

19.♕e3 ♘b7 20.e5 would be more accurate but still with the text move White preserves his huge advantage which is based on the control of space, the bishop pair and a strong plan: a combined attack on center and king.

19...♘b7 20.e5!

Another difficult but justified decision. The opening of the d-file and the lack of coordination of the black pieces are more important assets than the weak d-pawn.

20...d×e5 21.f×e5 c5 22.♕e3 f5 23.♖fd1 a5 24.a4 ♖a6 25.♖d3 ♖b6 26.b3 ♔g8 (D)



27.♗h5!

A nice move, preparing an attack on the black king, which will come via the g3-square!

27...♖b4 28.♕f4

Clearing the way for a white rook to land on g3, when the idea ♗f6 would be strong.

28...♕b6 29.♗f6! ♕c7

Black cannot take the piece: 29...g×f6 30.♖g3+ ♔h8 31.♕h6.

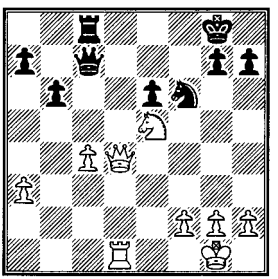
30.♕g3!

The white queen returns to its best square! The coming ♖d7 is hard to meet, so Black resigned. A crystal-clear plan which worked efficiently. **1-0**

The last game to be examined is quite typical for similar pawn structures. It was one of these games that can impress you for a long time – the main idea looks "horrible" at first sight, but the logic behind it is very clear.

(130) Krasenkow –Sakaev
Copenhagen 2003
Queen's Indian Defense [E12]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.♘c3 ♗b7 5.a3 d5 6.c×d5 ♘×d5 7.♕c2 ♘×c3 8.b×c3 ♗e7 9.e4 0-0 10.♗d3 c5 11.0-0 ♕c8 12.♕e2 ♗a6 13.♖d1 ♗×d3 14.♖×d3 ♘d7 15.e5 ♕c6 16.♗g5 ♖ae8 17.♖ad1 f6 18.e×f6 ♗×f6 19.♗×f6 ♘×f6 20.♘e5 ♕c7 21.c4 c×d4 22.♖×d4 ♖d8 23.♕e3 ♖×d4 24.♕×d4 ♖c8 (D)



Each side has a weak pawn but White seems to have the more pleasant game, as he fully controls the only open file of the board and his pieces are more actively placed. But a concrete plan is in need.

25.g4!

As on the queenside and on the center, White cannot achieve anything tangible, he should focus on the kingside. So, he should advance his kingside pawns, creating activity on this side, gaining more space and kicking the f6-knight away. Importantly, there is no way Black can benefit from the white king's voluntary weakening.

25...h6

Black could consider 25...g5!? 26.h4! g×h4 (26...h5 27.g×h5 g×h4 28.h6!±) 27.g5 ♘h5 28.♘g4 ♕g7

29.♘h6+ ♔h8 30.♕×h4± as an alternative.

26.h4 ♕c5?!

Black should retain the queens on the board with 26...♖f8 27.h5 ♕b7 28.♕d6 ♖e8±. He could then hope to benefit eventually from the weakened white king... Anyway, in the endgame, his survival chances are close to zero.

27.g5 h×g5 28.h×g5 ♕×d4 29.♖×d4 ♘h5

The alternative 29...♘e8 fails to improve Black's position: 30.♔g2 ♖c7 31.♔g3 ♔f8 32.♔g4 ♔e7 33.♔h5 ♘d6 34.f4 ♘f5 35.♖d3, when White has a simple plan: ♔g6-h7, g6 and a4-a5.

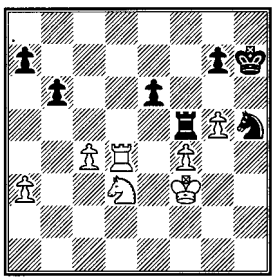
30.♔g2 ♔h7

Alternatives such as 30...♖f8 31.♘g6 ♖e8 (31...e5 32.♖e4 ♘f4+ 33.♖×f4!+−) 32.♔f3 e5 33.♖e4 and ♔g4+− or 30...♖c5 31.g6 ♖c8 32.♖d7 ♖a8 33.♔f3 ♘f6 34.♖e7 were not really helpful.

31.f4?!

A slip. Correct was 31.♔f3! ♖c5 (31...♖f8+ 32.♔g4 ♖f5 33.♘d3 g6 34.♖d7+ ♘g7 35.♖×a7+−) 32.♔e4 b5 (32...♖a5 33.♖d6!+−) 33.♖d8! b×c4 (33...g6 34.♖d7+ ♔g8 35.♔d4+−) 34.g6+ ♔h6 35.f4 ♘f6+ 36.♔e3+−.

31...♖f8 32.♔f3 ♖f5 33.♘d3 (D)



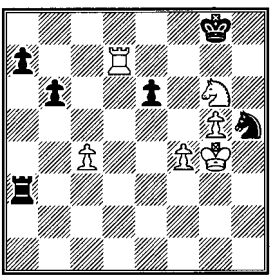
33...g6?!

Black returns the favor. He should continue with 33...e5! 34.♘×e5! (34.♔g4 e×d4 35.♔×f5 ♘g3+ 36.♔e5 [36.♔e6 ♔g6 37.♘e5+ (37.♔e5 ♘e2 38.♔e4 ♔h5!=) 37...♔h5 38.♔d5 ♘e2 (38...♘f5? 39.♔e4 g6 40.♔d3! +−) 39.♔e4 ♔h4 40.♘c6 d3 41.♔×d3 ♘×f4+ 42.♔e4 ♔×g5 43.♘×a7 ♘e2=] 36...♔g6 37.a4 [37.♔×d4 ♔f5; 37.c5 b×c5 38.♘×c5 ♘e2 39.a4 a5!=] 37...♘e2! [37...♘f5? 38.♘b4!±] 38.c5 [38.a5 b×a5 39.c5 ♘c3 40.♔×d4 ♘b5+ 41.♔e5 a4 42.c6 a3 43.♘b4 a5 44.♘a2 ♘c7=] 38...b×c5 39.♘×c5 a5! 40.♔e4 d3!=) 34...♘×f4 35.♔e4 ♖f8 (35...♘e2 36.g6+ ♔h6 37.♖d7 ♘g3+ 38.♔d5±) 36.♖d7, when White's advantage would be obvious but Black has somehow improved his chances, as would be no longer be simply lost!

34.♖d7+ ♔g8 35.♔g4!

Naive would be 35.♖e7! ♘×f4! 36.♘×f4 e5.

35...♖a5 36.♘e5 ♖×a3 37.♘×g6 (D)



White is winning. The black king has been caught in multiple mating nets.

37...♘g7

Or 37...♘g3 38.♖e7 ♘f5 39.♖×e6 ♘e3+ 40.♔h5 ♘×c4 41.♘e7+ ♔f7 42.f5+−.

38.♖d8+ ♔f7 39.♘e5+ ♔e7 40.♘c6+ ♔f7 41.♖d7+ ♔f8

41...♔g6 42.♘e7+ ♔h7 (42...♔f7 43.♘f5++−) 43.f5+− wouldn't make any difference.

42.g6 ♘e8

42...♘f5 43.♔g5+−

43.♖f7+ And Black resigned in view of 43...♔g8 44.♘e7+ ♔h8

45.♖h7#. The final violent attack was particularly impressive. We do not see such attacks in endgames that often. **1-0**

Conclusion

I will conclude with two very nice quotes relevant to our theme: "The person who knows 'how' will always have a job. The person who knows 'why' will always be the boss" – James Whitaker. "There is a difference between knowing the path and walking the path." – Lawrence Fishburn in *The Matrix* . Do you recognize patterns of judgment, planning and execution?

Recipes from the Grandmaster's Kitchen

Concept

This is a collection of analyzed games which I did back in 2007. Nearly each game has a story to tell and something to teach... I am always asking my trainees to analyze games in depth – especially their own after a tournament finishes. I strongly believe that this is the correct way to chess perfection. Well, nothing new under the sun; every decent trainer does the same!

Achieving a grandmaster norm

Since June 2006 I have been the Head Trainer of the Turkish Pre-National Men Team. My squad then consisted of grandmasters Mikhail Gurevich, Suat Atalik and international masters Umut Atakisi, Emre Can, Mert Erdogdu, Yakup Erturan, Boris Esen, Emre Can, Mustafa Yilmaz, Burak Firat and Kivanc Haznedaroglu.

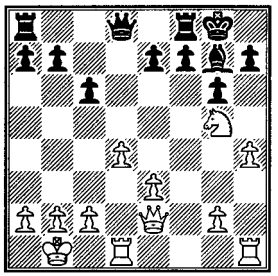
I work with my IM boys about a week every month, preparing every subject of our respectful sport, to help them become better players and achieve the grandmaster title. This game, played in the last round of the Pardubice Open in Czech Republic, was of a very important sporting value. If Kivanc could win it, he would get his first grandmaster norm. My notes were written while I was watching Kivanc's game live on the internet.

(131) Haznedaroglu – Warakomski
Pardubice 2007
Modern Defense [B15]

1.e4 g6 2.d4 ♗g7 3.♘c3 c6 4.♗e3 d5 5.h3 d×e4 6.♘×e4 ♘h6

An interesting plan, although Black's main strategy can be seen in the alternatives:

(a) 6...♘d7 7.♕d2 (7.♘f3 ♘gf6 8.♘×f6+ ♘×f6 9.♗c4 [9.♗e2 0-0 (9...♘d5 10.♗d2 ♕c7 11.0-0 0-0 12.♕c1± Lagvilava-Rubene, Yerevan 1996) 10.0-0 ♗f5 11.c3 ♕c7 12.♕c1 ♖fe8 13.♖e1 ½-½ Leiro Giralt-Fernandez, Spain 1996; 9.c4 ♕a5+ 10.♗d2 ♕b6 11.♗d3 ♗f5 12.♗×f5 g×f5 13.0-0 e6 14.♗f4 0-0 15.♗d6 ♖fd8 16.c5 ♕×b2 17.♖b1 ♕×a2 18.♖×b7 ♕a6 19.♕b3∞/= Trefny-Pribyl, Pardubice 1992] 9...♘d5 [9...0-0 10.0-0 ♕d6 11.♖e1 ♗e6 12.♗f1 b5 13.♕c1 ♘d5 14.♗h6± Zulfugarli-Ibragimov, Azerbaijan 1999] 10.0-0 0-0 11.♗g5 h6 12.♗h4 ♗e6 13.♗b3 ♘f4 14.♗g3 ♗×b3 15.a×b3 ♘e6= Rendle-Thomas, West Bromwich 2004) 7...♘gf6 8.♘×f6+ (8.♘g3 0-0 9.♘f3 ♕c7 10.♗f4 ♕b6 11.♗c4 ♕×b2 12.0-0 ♕b6 13.♖fe1∞/= Korbut-Gromova, St. Petersburg 2004) 8...♘×f6 9.0-0-0 (9.♘f3?! ♘e4 10.♕d3 ♕a5+ 11.c3 ♗f5 12.♕d1 0-0= Shadrina-Labutin 1997) 9...♗e6 10.♔b1 0-0 11.♘f3 ♘e4 12.♕e1 ♘d6 13.h4 ♗g4 14.♗e2 ♘f5 15.♘g5 ♘×e3 16.f×e3 ♗×e2 17.♕×e2± (D)

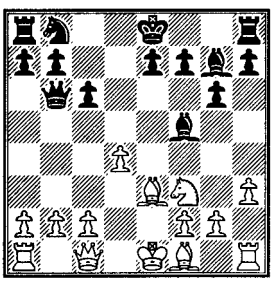


Chiburdanidze-Fischdick, Manila 1992.

(b) 6...♗f5 7.♘c3 (7.♘c5 ♘d7 8.♘×d7 ♕×d7 9.♘f3 h5 10.♗c4 ♗e6 11.♗×e6 ♕×e6 12.0-0± Zimmermann-Treffert, Hessen 1999; 7.♘g3 ♗e6 8.♘f3 ♘h6 9.♗d3 ♘f5 10.♗×f5 ♗×f5 11.0-0 ♗c8 12.♕d2 0-0 13.♗h6± Guimaraes-Rios Filho, Rio de Janeiro 1995) 7...♘f6 8.♕d2 ♘bd7 9.0-0-0 (9.♗h6? ♗×h6 10.♕×h6 ♗×c2 11.g4 ♗e4 12.♖h2 ♗d5 13.f4 ♕a5 14.0-0-0 0-0-0∓ Herbrechtsmeier-Koch, France 2001) 9...♕a5 10.♘f3±.

(c) 6...♘f6 7.♘×f6+ ♗×f6 8.c3 (8.♕d2!? 0-0 9.0-0-0±) 8...0-0 9.♗c4 ♘d7 10.♘e2 e5 11.0-0 e×d4 12.♘×d4 ♘b6 13.♗e2 ♘d5 14.♗h6 ♗g7 15.♗×g7 ♔×g7 16.♖e1 ♘f4 17.♗f1 ♕f6= Wildi-Vonthron, Germany 1998.

7.♘g3 ♕b6! 8.♕c1 ♘f5 9.♘×f5 ♗×f5 10.♘f3 (D)



10.c3 0-0 11.♘f3 ♘d7 12.♗e2 ♕a5 13.♗h6 (13.0-0 e5 14.d×e5 ♘×e5 15.♘×e5 ♗×e5 16.♖d1 ♖fe8= Velandia-Minaya Molano, Bogota 1978) 13...e5 14.♗×g7 ♔×g7 15.0-0 ♖fe8 16.♖e1 +=.

10...♘a6!?

10...0-0 11.c3 ♘d7

11.c3 ♘c7 12.♗c4 ♘d5 13.0-0! 0-0

13...♘×e3?! 14.f×e3 (x f7) 14...0-0 15.♘g5±

14.♗h6 f6

14...♗×h6?! 15.♕×h6 ♕×b2? 16.♗×d5 c×d5 17.♘g5 +-

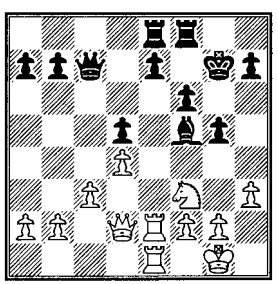
15.♖e1 ♖ae8 16.♖e2 ♕c7 17.♕d2

17.♗f4!? looks also like a good alternative: 17...e5 18.♗g3 b5 19.♗b3±.

17...g5 18.♗×g7 ♔×g7 19.♗×d5!

Motif training! Recently (June 2007, in the Foca [Turkey] training camp) we had studied a game Adams-Seirawan, Bermuda 2000, where a similar idea was introduced. The alternative 19.♖ae1 ♘f4 20.♖e3 e6 is unclear and leads to different play.

19...c×d5 20.♖ae1 (D)



The pawn structure is very similar to a Catalan with reversed colors. White enjoys a slight advantage because of his pressure on the e-file and sometimes even on the kingside, while the chief plan for black counterplay, a minority attack with ...b5-b4, does not seem to be available

20...e6

20...♗e4 21.♘h2 e6 22.♘f1 ♕d6 23.♘g3 ♗g6 24.♖e3±

21.♘h2 h5

Although it further weakens his king, Black must win some vital space and squares for his bishop.

22.♘f1 ♕d6 23.♖e3 h4 24.♕e2 ♔f7 25.♘h2?!

25.♘d2 is accurate, as White can even create play on the queenside, with ideas such as ♘b3 and a4-a5.

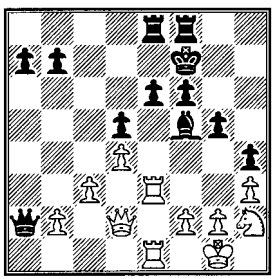
25...♕a6!

By exchanging queens, Black reduces White's pressure on his king and he can even get some play in the semi-opens b- and c-files.

26.♕d2!?

White has to play for a win and bravely sacrifices a pawn. Equal is the objective 26.♕h5+ ♗g6 27.♕g4 ♗f5 or 26.♕×a6 b×a6 27.♖3e2 (27.b3 ♖c8 28.♖c1 ♖c6 29.c4 ♖fc8 30.c5 e5 31.♘f3 ♗e4 32.d×e5 ♖×c5∓) 27...♔g6 28.♘g4 ♖c8 29.♘e3.

26...♕×a2 (D)



26...♕d6 is safer, but Black takes up the challenge.

27.f4!

White's main idea. While the opponent queen is misplaced in the queenside, he will create an attack directed at the opponent's king.

27...g×f4

27...♖g8 28.f×g5 ♖×g5 (28...f×g5? 29.♘f3 ♖g7 30.♖e5±) 29.♘f3 ♖g7 30.♘×h4 ♗e4 31.♕e2 gives White sufficient compensation.

28.♖3e2 ♖g8 29.♔h1

The alternative 29.♕×f4 ♗×h3 30.♘f3 ♗f5 31.♘×h4 ♗e4 32.♖f1 is not sufficient for more than a draw: 32...f5 33.♖×e4 d×e4 34.♕×e4 ♕×b2! 35.♘×f5 ♕×g2+ 36.♕×g2 ♖×g2+ 37.♔×g2 e×f5 38.♖×f5+ ♔e6.

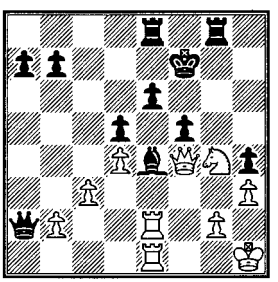
29...♗e4?

And Black slips! After the correct 29...♕a5! 30.♕×f4 ♕d8 31.♕×h4 ♖h8 32.♕f2 ♖eg8 33.♖e3 ♕d6 Black's position seems preferable as he seems to have everything under control, although White has chances because of the weak position of the black king.

30.♕×f4 f5

Better than 30...♗f5 31.♖f2 ♖g5 32.♕×h4 ♔g7 33.♘f3±.

31.♘g4! (D)



31...♖×g4?

Black panicked, but he should calm down and settle for an inferior endgame after 31...♖g7 32.♘e5+ ♔g8 33.♕×h4 ♕a5 34.♔h2 ♕d8 35.♕×d8 ♖×d8 36.♖a1 a6 37.g3±.

32.h×g4 h3 33.g×f5 h×g2+ 34.♔g1

White is nearly winning! Just take a look at the lonely queen at a2!

34...e×f5

34...♖h8 35.f×e6+ ♔×e6 36.♕e5+

35.♖×g2!

35.♖×e4? ♖×e4 36.♕×f5+ ♔g7 37.♖×e4 d×e4 38.♕f2=

35...♕a6 36.♕c7+! ♖e7 37.♖g7+! ♔×g7 38.♕×e7+ ♔h6 39.♔f2

Allowing the rook to come to help his queen. Black resigned as there is no salvation anymore in view of the threats ♕h4+ and ♖g1+. So, Kivanc achieved his first grandmaster norm. Congratulations! (Nowadays he is a grandmaster, as are other trainees from my squad; Esen and Can, while others are coming along, as Yilmaz, Erdogdu, etc.). **1-0**

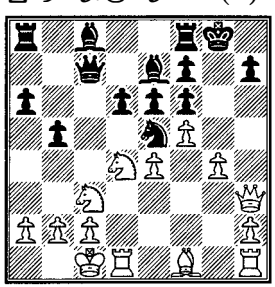
Opening Diagonals

Concept

Chessplayers rarely glance at this important subject. But the presence of open (or potentially open) diagonals is very significant. A "clever" and "alert" chessplayer should always care about open diagonals, trying to invest in their power and make the best of them. The concept is rather simple, but the way of handling it can vary. When on the attack, it is critical to open files and diagonals as soon as possible and at the least cost. Our first example will deal with a brutal attack in a famous game; the doubled f-pawns failed to protect their king:

(132) Kholmov – Bronstein
Kiev 1964
Sicilian Defense [B99]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 d6 4.d4 c×d4 5.♘×d4 a6 6.♗g5 e6 7.f4 ♗e7 8.♕f3 ♕c7 9.0-0-0 ♘bd7 10.g4 b5 11.♗×f6 g×f6 12.f5 ♘e5 13.♕h3 0-0 (D)



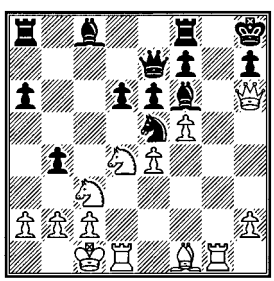
14.g5

A novelty at that time. Later, White often tried 14.♕h6 (and 14.♖g1) 14...♔h8 15.g5 ♖g8 16.g6 f×g6 17.f×e6 ♗b7 18.♘d5 ♗×d5 19.e×d5 f5! 20.♗g2 ♗f6∞. In the stem game for 13...0-0, Gligoric-Fischer, Bled/Zagreb/Belgrade 1959, White played 14.♘ce2.

14...b4?

Objectively, Black is fine after 14...f×g5! (as Kholmov confirmed in his 1982 book) 15.f×e6 f×e6 16.♘×e6 ♕d7 17.♘d5 (after 17.♘×f8?! ♕×h3 18.♗×h3 ♗×h3 the white f8-knight is trapped) 17...♕×e6 (or, possibly, 17...♖f3!?) 18.♕×e6+ ♗×e6 19.♘×e7+ ♔f7= which occurred in several later games. Therefore, White's novelty failed to refute the variation...

15.g×f6 ♗×f6 16.♖g1+ ♔h8 17.♕h6! ♕e7 (D)



Now it looks like Black has perfectly defended against White's threats. And this is partly true, as White cannot bring more pieces to the attack; or perhaps he can?

18.♘c6!!

But instead the game provided an amazing example of the deflecting ♘d4-c6 sacrifice. This idea enriched the arsenal of White's attacking ideas in the Sicilian. White wants to open the b1-h7 diagonal for his light-square bishop, creating a lethal threat on h7.

18...♘×c6

Now the attempt 19.♖d3? is par-

ried by the bishop's check from g5, and after 20.♖×g5 Black plays 20...f6. But White found a better move.

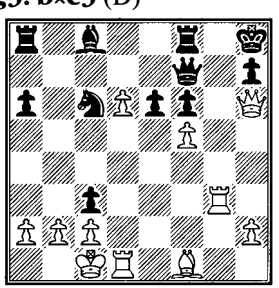
19.e5!!

White "cleaned" the e4-square and the b1-h7 diagonal, making his remaining minor pieces active. 19.♖d3 ♗g5+ 20.♖×g5 f6 leads nowhere.

19...♗g5+?

After 19...♗×e5 20.f6! ♗×f6 (forced!) 21.♗d3 ♗g5+ 22.♖×g5 f5 (22...f6 23.♖g3! [23.♗×h7 f×g5 24.♗e4+ ♔g8 25.♖g1 ♖a7 26.♘d5 ♕g7 27.♖×g5 ♕×g5+ 28.♕×g5+ ♖g7 29.♘f6+ ♔f7 30.♕h5+ ♔×f6 31.♕h4+ ♔f7 32.♗×c6 +=] 23...♖f7 24.♖dg1 ♕f8 [even worse is 24...♗d7 25.♘e4! with the idea of 26.♘×d6 and 27.♖g7] 25.♖g8+ ♕×g8 26.♖×g8+ ♔×g8 27.♘e4±) 23.♖dg1! ♖a7 24.♘e2! ♘e5 25.♘f4± and Black is unable to survive the attack. The most stubborn defense is 19...♘×e5!? 20.♘e4 ♘g6! (not 20...♘d7? 21.♖×d6! e×f5 where 22.♘×f6! just wins) 21.♘×f6 ♕×f6 22.f×g6 ♕g7! (22...f×g6? 23.♗g2! +−) 23.♕×g7+ ♔×g7 24.g×f7+ (after the capture on h7 Black also has problems) 24...♔×f7 25.♖×d6± and White is clearly better, but, as Kholmov notes in his book, it is hard to say with confidence that White is winning. The worst of Black's options 19...d×e5? loses to 20.♘e4 ♗g5+ 21.♘×g5 f6 22.♘×h7.

20.♖×g5 f6 21.e×d6 ♕f7 22.♖g3! b×c3 (D)



23.♗c4!

A nice move, after which Black is paralyzed. 23.♗e2 ♖d8 24.♗f3! (24.♖dg1? ♖a7 25.♗h5 ♕f8∞) 24...c×b2+ 25.♔b1 ♘e7 (25...♗d7 26.♗×c6 ♗×c6 27.f×e6+−) 26.f×e6 ♗×e6 27.♗h5 ♗×a2+ 28.♔×b2 ♖ab8+ 29.♔a3 ♘g8 30.♗×f7 ♘×h6 31.♗×a2± was not bad either.

23...c×b2+ 24.♔b1 ♘d8

Alternatives such as 24...♖g8 25.♖×g8+ ♕×g8 26.d7! ♗×d7 27.♖×d7 ♕g1+ 28.♔×b2 ♖b8+ 29.♗b3+− or 24...♖e8 25.d7 ♗×d7 26.♖×d7 ♖e7 27.♗×e6 ♕f8 28.♖g8++− or, finally, 24...♖d8 25.f×e6 ♕f8 26.e7 ♘×e7 27.♕×f8+ ♖×f8 28.d×e7 ♖e8 29.♖d8+− confirm Black's misery.

25.♖dg1?!

Kholmov even put a question mark to this move, calling it a technical inaccuracy. His line with 25.d7 is much stronger: 25...♗×d7 (25...♗b7 26.♖dg1 White wins at once) 26.♖dg1 and ♖g7+−.

25...♖a7 26.d7!?

Also winning is 26.♗e2 e×f5 27.♗h5.

26...♖×d7

26...♗×d7 27.♖g7

27.f×e6 ♘×e6 28.♗×e6 ♖d1+

The only move.

29.♖×d1 ♗×e6 30.♔×b2

Anyway, Black does not have the resources to resist.

30...♖b8+

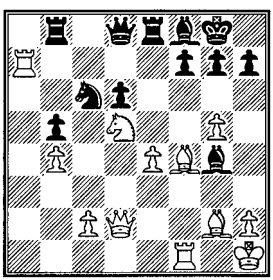
30...♗×a2 31.♖d7 ♖b8+ 32.♔a3! +−

31.♔a1 ♗×a2?! 32.♖gd3 ♕e7 33.♔×a2 ♕e6+ 34.♖b3 1-0

The next example also includes a brutal attack; diagonals (and files) are opened around the center and the black king, making Black's position undefendable...

(133) Ivanchuk – Topalov
Novgorod 1996
Sicilian Defense [B85]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e2 e6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.f4 0-0 9.♔h1 ♕c7 10.a4 ♘c6 11.♗e3 ♖e8 12.♗f3 ♖b8 13.g4 ♗f8 14.g5 ♘d7 15.♗g2 ♘×d4 16.♗×d4 b5 17.a×b5 a×b5 18.♖a7 ♕d8 19.b4 e5 20.♗e3 e×f4 21.♗×f4 ♘e5 22.♘d5 ♗g4 23.♕d2 ♘c6 (D)



White's position is more active, but it seems like that his a7-rook will have to retreat, reducing his advantage. So, either a tactical solution should be found or else he has to accept that Black's position perhaps is not that bad...

24.g6!!

An excellent solution, which opens the h4-d8 diagonal by making room on the g5-square for the bishop!

24...♘×a7?!

Allowing the exchange of rooks does not help. Black should also have avoided variations like 24...h×g6 25.♖×f7! (or 25.♗g5 ♕c8 [25...♗e7 26.♘×e7+ ♘×e7 27.e5! d5 28.♕f4 ♗e6 29.♕h4+–] 26.♖c7 ♕a6 27.♕c3 ♖bc8 28.♖a1+–) 25...♗e6 26.♗g5+–, or 24...f×g6 25.♗g5 ♗e7 (25...♕c8 26.♖c7 ♕a6 27.♕c3+- ♖bc8 28.♖a1+–) 26.♘×e7+ ♘×e7 27.e5! d5 28.♕f4 ♗e6 29.♕h4+–. But he should have opted for 24...f6! when White would have preserved his advantage with 25.g×h7+ (but not 25.♖c7?! ♘e7! [25...♖c8? 26.♖×c6 ♖×c6 27.♘×f6+ ♕×f6 (27...g×f6 28.♕d5+ ♗e6 29.g×h7+ ♔×h7 30.♕×c6±) 28.♕d5+ ♗e6 29.g×h7+ ♔×h7 30.♕×c6 ♖c8 31.♕×b5±] 26.g×h7+ ♔×h7∞ or 25.♘×f6+?! ♕×f6 26.♕d5+ ♔h8 27.♕×c6 ♕×g6=) 25...♔×h7 26.♖a3 planning ♖g3.

25.g×f7+ ♔h8

25...♔×f7? 26.♗g5+ +-

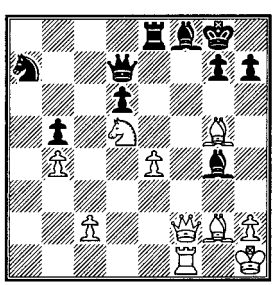
26.♗g5! ♕d7

26...♖e7? 27.♘×e7 ♗×e7 28.f8♕+ wins.

27.f×e8♘ ♖×e8

After 27...♕×e8 White wins by opening the h1-a8 diagonal: 28.e5! (or 28.♘f6! g×f6 29.♗×f6+ ♗g7 30.♗×g7+ ♔×g7 31.♕d4+ ♔g8 32.e5!+–) 28...d×e5 29.♘f6! ♕c8 (29...g×f6 30.♗×f6+ ♗g7 31.♗×g7+ ♔×g7 32.♕g5++–) 30.♕d3 g×f6 (30...g6 31.♕e3!+–) 31.♗×f6+ ♗g7 32.♗×g7+ ♔×g7 33.♕d6!+–. It is now the other bishop that takes advantage of the long diagonal.

28.♕f2! ♔g8 (D)



29.e5!

As above, the opening of the second important diagonal, h1-a8, allows the other white bishop to join the battle.

29...h6

Black lacks a proper defense: 29...d×e5 30.♘c7! (30.♘b6 ♕c7 31.♗d5++–) 30...♕×c7 31.♗d5+ ♔h8

32.♕×f8+ ♖×f8 33.♖×f8# or 29...♗e6 30.♘b6 (30.♘f4 ♗c4 31.e6 ♕c7 32.♘d5+−) 30...♕c7 31.♗d5! ♗×d5+ 32.♘×d5 ♕b7 33.♕f3 ♕d7 34.e6!+− or, finally, 29...♘c8 30.♘c7! ♕×c7 31.♗d5++−.

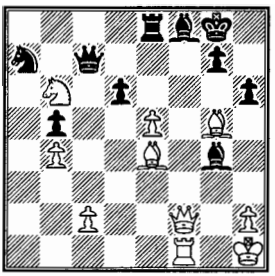
30.♘b6

30.♗e7! ♗×e7 (30...♗f5 31.e×d6 ♘c6 32.♕×f5+−) 31.♕f7+ ♔h8 32.♗e4! ♗e6 33.♕g6 ♗g8 34.♖f7! looks even better!

30...♕c7 31.♗d5+ ♔h7

If 31...♔h8, then 32.♕×f8+! ♖×f8 33.♖×f8+ ♔h7 34.♗e4+ g6 35.♗f6! and White wins. White's bishops work excellently on every diagonal of the board!

32.♗e4+ ♔g8 (D)



32...g6 was no real help because of 33.♘d5 and ♘f6+.

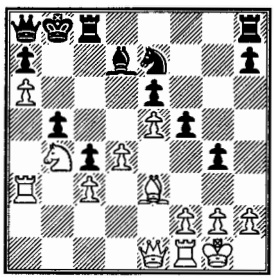
33.♘d5! ♕d7 34.♘e7+

And Black resigned in view of 34...♗×e7 35.♕f7+ ♔h8 36.♕g6. **1-0**

Weak square complexes can easily decide a game, long before the actual result is registered:

(134) Van Wely – Topalov
Dortmund 2005
French Defense [C02]

1.d4 e6 2.e4 d5 3.e5 c5 4.c3 ♘c6 5.♘f3 ♗d7 6.a3 f6 7.♗d3 ♕c7 8.♗f4 0-0-0 9.0-0 c4 10.♗c2 ♕b6 11.b3 c×b3 12.♗×b3 g5 13.♗e3 g4 14.♘e1 ♘a5 15.♗c2 f5 16.♘d3 ♔b8 17.a4 ♖c8 18.♕e2 ♕a6 19.♕e1 b6 20.♘a3 ♗×a3 21.♖×a3 ♘e7 22.♘b4 ♕b7 23.♗d3 ♘c4 24.♗×c4 d×c4 25.a5 b5 26.a6 ♕a8 (D)



It looks that Black has big problems as his queen will now be temporarily out of play, but there is no way White can use it to his advantage.

27.♕e2 ♘d5! 28.♘×d5?!

A dubious decision which allows Black to activate his forces. Better was 28.♕b2! ♘×b4 29.♕×b4 ♕d5 (29...♕e4? 30.♕d6+ ♖c7 31.d5 ♕×d5 32.♗×a7+±) 30.♕d6+ ♕×d6 31.e×d6 ♗c6 32.♗f4±.

28...♕×d5

Now the difference between the bishops is obvious. Black's bishop will apply pressure along the long diagonal h1-a8, while its counterpart will do nothing!

29.f4

29.f3 ♖cg8 doesn't help White.

29...h5!

Black prepares his own offensive on the kingside. The threat ...h4-h3 will open the long diagonal and Black will benefit from it (...♗c6 is coming).

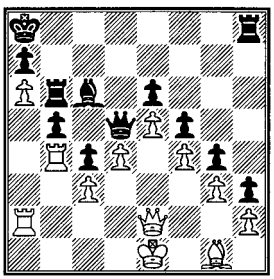
30.♖b1 h4 31.♔f1

A wise decision. The white king has to run from the dangerous diagonal.

31...♗c6 32.♗g1 ♔a8 33.♖b4 ♖b8

As Black is in no hurry (where is White's counterplay?), he also takes some measures on the other side (the two weaknesses rule?) – the a6-pawn is also weak!

34.♖a2 ♖b6 35.♔e1 h3! 36.g3 (D)



36...♖c8!

There is nothing left for this rook on the kingside – the a6-pawn is the target now! Just compare the two bishops...

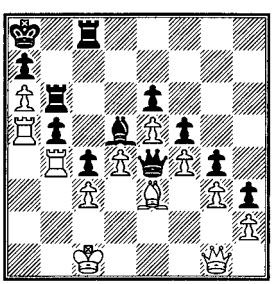
37.♗e3 ♗d7

Topalov has improved the position of all his pieces and is now ready for more active actions. Unfortunately White must just sit and wait – he hasn't any counterplay.

38.♖a5 ♕h1+ 39.♔d2 ♗c6 40.♕f2 ♗d5 41.♕g1

41.♖b×b5? allows a black rook to join the attack on the white king: 41...♖cb8 42.♖×b6 (42.♖b4 ♖×b4 43.c×b4 ♖×b4–+) 42...♖×b6–+.

41...♕e4 42.♔c1 (D)



White's position is hopelessly passive. Again 42.♖b×b5? loses to 42...♖cb8 (mate in 16!). 42.♕e1 ♖cc6 43.♕f1 ♖×a6 44.♖a×b5 ♖cb6 45.♖×b6 a×b6 46.♖b2 b5! will also lose.

42...♖cc6!

Now a black rook will enter the attack by force.

43.♕f2

Once more 43.♖a×b5 is not of a help: 43...♖×b5 44.♖×b5 ♖×a6 45.♔b2 ♗c6! 46.♖b4 ♗a4 47.♕c1 ♗b3! 48.♖×b3 c×b3–+.

43...♖×a6 44.♖a×b5

Or 44.♖b×b5 ♖×a5 45.♖×a5 ♖b6 46.♖a1 ♖b3–+.

44...♖a1+ 45.♖b1

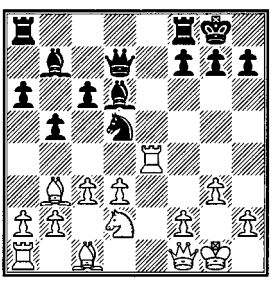
45.♔d2 ♕d3#

45...♖×b1+ 46.♖×b1 ♖a6! 47.♕d2 ♕h1+ 0-1

Good home preparation can result in brutal attacks; chess-machines are very helpful!

(135) Almasi – Khalifman
Ubeda 1997
Ruy Lopez [C89]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.c3 d5 9.e×d5 ♘×d5 10.♘×e5 ♘×e5 11.♖×e5 c6 12.d3 ♗d6 13.♖e1 ♕h4 14.g3 ♕h3 15.♖e4 ♕d7 16.♘d2 ♗b7 17.♕f1 (D)



The notorious Marshall Gambit of the Ruy Lopez.

17...c5!

Opening up the important h1-a8 diagonal should be a priority for Black.

18.♖e1 ♔h8 19.a4 ♘f4!

This was a strong novelty at the time, so strong that nobody has repeated this line for White since then! 19...b4? is bad because of 20.♘e4 b×c3 (20...f5? 21.♗×d5 ♗×d5 22.♘×d6 ♕×d6 23.♗f4±) 21.b×c3 ♕c6 22.♗×d5 ♕×d5 23.♖b1 ♗c7 24.c4± and 19...f5? 20.a×b5 a×b5 21.♖×a8 ♗×a8 22.♗d1 g5?! 23.♘f3± was tried in the game Ivanchuk-Sokolov, Amsterdam 1996.

20.♘e4?

The main, preferable alternative is 20.f3 c4 (20...♘×d3 21.♕×d3 c4 22.♗×c4 [22.♘×c4?? ♗c5+−+] 22...b×c4 23.♕×c4 ♖ac8 [23...f5!?] 24.♕f1 ♗c5+∞/= 20...♘h3+ 21.♔h1 ♘g5 22.a×b5 [22.♘e4 ♘×f3! 23.♕×f3 f5∞; 22.♕f2 f5∞/=] 22...a×b5 23.♖×a8 ♗×a8 24.♗d1 f5∞) 21.g×f4 (21.d×c4 ♗c5+ 22.♔h1 ♘d3 23.♖e2 ♖ae8∓) 21...c×b3 22.♘×b3 (22.a×b5 ♗×f4∞/=) 22...b×a4∞/=. But in any case, White's position is not that attractive...

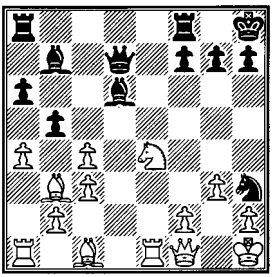
20...♘h3+ 21.♔h1

21.♔g2? f5 -+

21...c4!

Also good seems 21...♘×f2+ 22.♕×f2 f5 23.♕g2 (23.♕e2?! f×e4 [23...c4 24.d×c4 (24.♗c2 c×d3 25.♕×d3 f×e4) 24...♗×e4+ 25.♔g1 ♗b7∓] 24.d×e4 ♗×g3!−+) 23...c4 (23...f×e4 24.d×e4 ♖ae8∞) 24.♗c2 ♖ae8! (24...c×d3 25.♗×d3 f×e4 [25...♗c5 26.♗c2 ♖ae8 27.♗f4∞] 26.♗×e4 ♖ae8 27.♗d2 ♖×e4 28.♖×e4 ♗c5 29.♗f4 ♕d3 30.♖ae1 b×a4∓) 25.d4 (25.♗d2 c×d3 26.♗×d3 ♗c5∓) 25...f×e4 26.♗e3 b4∓.

22.d×c4 (D)



White is in trouble: 22.♗d1 c×d3 (22...♘×f2+ 23.♕×f2 f5 24.♗f3 f×e4 25.d×e4 ♖ae8 26.♕e2 ♗×g3 27.h×g3 ♕h3+ 28.♕h2 ♖×e4!! 29.♗e3 ♕×h2+ 30.♔×h2 ♖×f3 31.♗d4∓) 23.♗f3 ♖ae8∓ or 22.♗c2 c×d3 23.♗×d3 ♘×f2+! 24.♕×f2 f5 25.♕g2 (25.♕d4 f×e4 26.♗×e4 ♖ae8 27.♗f4 ♖×e4! 28.♖×e4 ♗×f4! 29.♕×d7 ♗×e4+ 30.♔g1 ♗e3#) 25...♖ae8 26.♗c2 b4!∓ doesn't seem like a helpful alternative.

22...♘×f2+!

Black could also go for 22...♗c5 23.f3 ♗×e4 24.f×e4 ♘f2+ 25.♔g1 (25.♔g2? ♕h3+ 26.♔f3 ♕h5+ 27.♔g2 f5!−+) 25...f5! (25...♘×e4+? 26.♔g2 ♘f2 27.♗e3±) 26.♗e3 ♗×e3 27.♖×e3 f×e4∓ but the text is good enough.

23.♕×f2 f5 24.♕d4

White's options are many, but none seems to help:

(a) 24.a×b5 f×e4 25.♕e3 ♕h3! 26.b×a6 ♖×a6 27.♖×a6 ♖f1+ 28.♖×f1 ♕×f1+ 29.♕g1 e3+ 30.♖c6 ♗×c6#.

(b) 24.♗f4 f×e4 25.♕e3 ♖×f4! 26.g×f4 ♗×f4 27.♖ad1 (27.♕×f4 e3+ 28.♔g1 ♕c6 ⇄a∓e∞) 27...♕×d1 28.♗×d1 ♗×e3 29.♖×e3 b×c4∓.

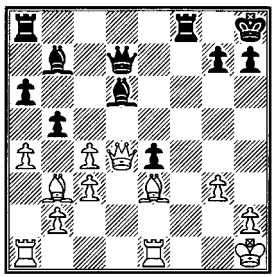
(c) 24.♗e3 ♗×e4+! (24...♕e6 25.♗c2 f×e4 26.♕e2 b×c4 27.♖ad1 ♖f3∓) 25.♔g1 f4! 26.♗×f4 (26.g×f4 ♖f6−+) 26...♖×f4 27.g×f4 ♗c5−+.

(d) 24.c×b5 f×e4 25.♕g2 (25.♕e3 ♗c5! 26.♕×c5 e3+ 27.♗d5 ♗×d5+ 28.♔g1 ♖f2! 29.♗×e3 ♕h3!−+) 25...♖f2! 26.♕×f2 e3+ 27.♕g2 ♗×g3!! 28.♖×e3 ♕f5!−+.

24...f×e4

24...♗×e4+? would be rather naive, especially after 25.♖×e4! f×e4 26.♗f4∞.

25.♗e3 (D)



25.c5 e3+ 26.♔g1 ♕h3 27.♗d5 ♖f2−+ would be curtains.

25...♕h3!!

Threatening ...♗×g3! and ...♖f2!. The immediate 25...♖f2? would allow White to escape: 26.♖f1! (26.♗×f2 e3+ 27.♔g1 ♕h3−+; 26.c5 ♕g4 27.♗×f2 ♕f3+ 28.♔g1 e3−+) 26...♖×b2 27.♖fb1 ♖e2 28.♖a2!∞.

26.♕×d6

White is lost anyway: 26.♔g1 ♖f2! 27.♔×f2 ♕×h2+ 28.♔f1 ♖f8+ 29.♗f4 ♗×f4−+ or 26.♕d2 ♗×g3 27.♕g2 ♕×g2+ 28.♔×g2 ♗×e1 29.♖×e1 b×c4 30.♗×c4 ♖ac8 31.b3 ♖c6−+.

26...♖f2! 27.♗×f2 e3+ 28.♕d5 ♗×d5+ 29.c×d5 e×f2

And the extra material assures Black's win.

30.♖f1 ♖f8 31.a×b5

31.d6 ♕f5 32.♔g2 ♕f3+ 33.♔h3 ♖f6−+

31...♕g4

31...h5! with the idea ...h4, h×g3 and if g×h4 then ...♕f3 mate, wins quicker.

32.♔g2

32.♗d1 ♕e4+

32...♕f3+

32...♕e4+ 33.♔h3 ♕f5+ 34.♔g2 ♕f3+ is just a transposition.

33.♔h3 ♖f5

33...g5! 34.♖a4 ♕f5+ 35.♔g2 a×b5 36.♖b4 ♕f3+ 37.♔h3 ♖f6 and mate follows.

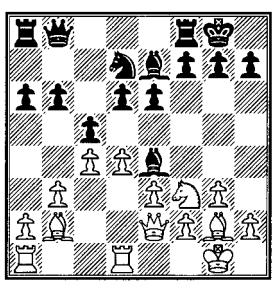
34.♖a4 ♖h5+ 35.♖h4 ♖×h4+ 36.♔×h4 ♕e2

And White resigned in view of 37.♖×f2 ♕×f2 38.b×a6 ♕×h2+ 39.♔g4 ♕×b2−+. **0-1**

Of course, sometimes material has to invested for conquering important diagonals.

(136) Smyslov – Kasparov
Moscow 1981
Reti Opening [A30]

1.♘f3 c5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.g3 b6 4.♗g2 ♗b7 5.0-0 e6 6.♘c3 ♗e7 7.b3 0-0 8.♗b2 d6 9.e3 ♘bd7 10.d4 a6 11.♕e2 ♘e4 12.♖fd1 ♕b8 13.♘×e4 ♗×e4 (D)



14.♘e5?

The start of a wrong combination; White didn't correctly evaluate the resulting position.

14...♗×g2 15.♘×d7 ♕b7! 16.♘×f8 ♗f3! 17.♕d3 ♖×f8

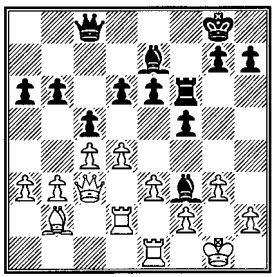
White is an exchange up but it is hard to believe that the f3-bishop is less important than any white rook! Black's control over the light squares around the white king should be more than enough compensation.

18.♖d2 f5!

Now the black rook will come to help in the attack (...♖f6-h6/g6) and the

black queen has found a nice diagonal (h5-e8) to join as well!

19.♖e1 ♕c8! 20.♕c3 ♖f6 21.a3 (D)



21...♕e8!

A major piece comes to help the black bishop. The threat of course is ...♕h5-h3.

22.d×c5

22.e4 loses to 22...f×e4 23.d5 e×d5 24.c×d5 ♕h5 25.h4 ♕g4 26.♔h2 ♖h6 and 22.♕d3 to 22...♕h5 23.♔f1 ♖h6 24.h4 ♗×h4.

22...♕h5

Now the immediate threat is ...♕×h2+!.

23.h4 ♕g4

The text also wins, but most accurate was 23...♖g6! 24.e4 ♗×h4 25.e×f5 ♗×g3.

24.♔h2 b×c5

24...e5! 25.c×d6 ♖h6 mates!

25.♖h1 ♖g6 26.♔g1 ♗×h4! 27.♕a5 h6 0-1

Conclusion

The concept of open files and diagonals is broad and generally includes all kinds of positions. The guide remains the same for both: look carefully for them and properly exploit them!

Small Advantages

Concept

We often encounter positions where one side has an infinitesimal or practically invisible advantage. There are numerous annotated games in which we read about a small positional advantage that is in itself insufficient for victory, or about the active moves of the opponent that neutralized it. The truth lies somewhere in between. A "negligible" advantage can, through a series of active moves, be converted into victory, but only if the defending side fails to make full use of its defensive potential. Overall, the positional advantage is a very broad concept. We could attempt to draw up some rules regarding the obligations of the side that wishes to increase its infinitesimal advantage.

1. Creation of new weaknesses in the opponent's camp, along with (if possible) threats against his king.

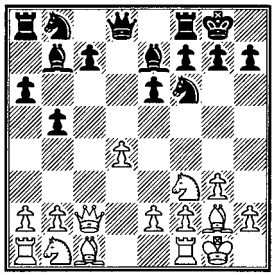
2. Transformation of the positional advantage into a material plus.

3. Transition to a won ending.

In most cases this process requires sensitive, initially "incomprehensible" maneuvers in tune with a concrete strategy that must be carefully designed and carried out. However, the most significant factors are effort, faith and dedication to the goal of victory, without burning bridges. Here we will analyse six very interesting and instructive games in which a small advantage was held by one side and we will see the various ways that the "stronger" was able to benefit from the handling of its small advantage!

(137) Ribli – Karpov
Amsterdam 1980
Catalan Opening [E05]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.g3 d5 4.♗g2 ♗e7 5.♘f3 0-0 6.0-0 d×c4 7.♕c2 a6 8.♕×c4 b5 9.♕c2 ♗b7 (D)



10.♗f4

Immediately attacking the c7-pawn. White's other main options are 10.♗d2 and 10.♗g5 but none of these moves has caused insuperable difficulties for Black. But of course, opening theory changes daily and what is good today might be bad tomorrow...

10...♘d5

Attacking the bishop on f4 looks natural but Black may have fewer difficulties to contend with after either 10...♗d6 or 10...♘c6.

11.♘c3 ♘×f4 12.g×f4 ♘d7 13.♖fd1 ♕c8 14.♘e4!

An important innovation (at that time) by Ribli which creates problems for Black in a position that was once considered harmless for him. Black's next move looks like an equalizer, yet slight difficulties remain. The problem is that White was first onto the d-file and he is able to launch an invasion with his rooks.

14...c5

And not 14...♗×e4 15.♕×e4 c5 because of 16.♘g5!.

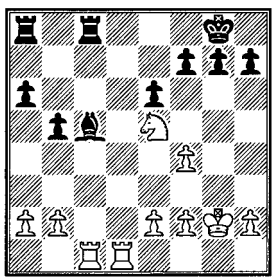
15.d×c5 ♘×c5 16.♘×c5 ♕×c5 17.♕×c5 ♗×c5 18.♖ac1

The other main option is 18.♘e5 ♗×g2 19.♔×g2 ♖fc8 (19...♖fd8 20.♖×d8+ ♖×d8 21.♖c1 ♗f8 22.♔f3 f6 23.♘d3± Adianto-Novikov, Biel 2006) 20.♖d7 f6 21.♘d3 ♗f8 22.a4 ♖d8 23.♖×d8 ♖×d8 24.a×b5 a×b5 25.♖a7± Kirov-Guseinov, Baku 1983.

18...♖fc8

As the main fight will take place on the queenside, it is more logical to place the f8-rook on c8. The alternative is 18...♖ac8 19.♘e5 ♗×g2 20.♔×g2 ♗e7 (20...♖fe8 21.♖d7 f6 22.♘f3 ♗f8 23.♖×c8 ♖×c8 24.♘d4 e5 25.f×e5 f×e5 26.♘f3 e4 27.♘d4± Lukov-Colin, Le Mans 2002) 21.♘c6 ♖c7 22.♘×e7+ ♖×e7 23.♖d6 ♖a7 24.♖cc6 ♖fa8 25.♖b6 ♔f8 26.e4± Gausel-Johansen, Gausdal 1999.

19.♘e5 ♗×g2 20.♔×g2 (D)



The position is "almost" a draw, but actually achieving this result is far from easy. The fact that even Karpov can lose this position is testimony to how difficult it is for Black. His main problems can be found in his queenside weaknesses on the light squares and the somewhat better placed white pieces.

20...f6

In the game Gavrikov-Azmaiparashvili, USSR 1981 Black tried to improve with 20...♖c7 but White still kept some pressure after 21.e3 (21.b4! ♗d6 22.♖×c7 ♗×c7 23.♘×f7 ♔×f7 [23...♗×f4 24.♘d8 e5 25.♘e6±] 24.♖d7+ ♔f6 25.♖×c7 a5 26.b×a5 ♖×a5 27.♖c2±) 21...♖ac8 22.♖d7 a5 23.b3 f6 24.♖×c7 ♖×c7 25.♘f3 ♔f7 26.♘d4. Another try is 20...♗f8 21.♖×c8 ♖×c8 22.♖d7 f6 23.♘f3 ♗c5 24.e3 ♖c6 25.♔f1 ♖d6 26.♖c7 ♗b6 27.♖b7± Splosnov-Mironov, Suwalki 2000.

21.♘f3 ♗f8

After 21...♔f7 White plays 22.♖d7+ ♗e7 23.♖cc7 and keeps some nasty pressure, while after 21...♔f8?! 22.♖d7 ♗e7 White can achieve a pleasant position with 23.♖×c8+! (23.♖cc7?! ♖×c7 24.♖×c7 ♗d6 25.♖d7 ♗×f4 26.e3 ♗e5! 27.♘×e5 f×e5 28.♖b7 ½-½ Novak-Prandstetter, Prague 1981) 23...♖×c8 24.♘d4 ±.

22.e3 g6

Once again 22...♔f7 is met by 23.♖d7+ ♔e8 24.♖cc7.

23.b3 ♗b4

Or 23...♗a3 24.♖×c8+ ♖×c8 25.♖d7 etc.

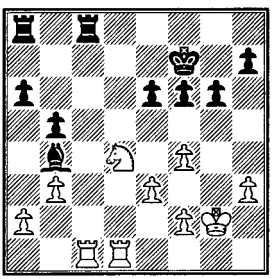
24.h3

This time 24.♖×c8+?! ♖×c8 25.♖d7 is not so good as after 25...♖c2 26.♘d4 ♖×a2 27.♘×e6 Black can launch a counterattack with 27...♗e1!.

24...♔f8

Black should strongly consider 24...♗a3!? 25.♖×c8+ ♖×c8 26.♖d7 ♖c2 27.♖a7 ♖c6 28.♘d4 ±. Although White stands slightly better, it remains to be seen if he can strengthen his position any further.

25.♘d4 ♔f7 (D)



It seems that Black has defended well and there do not seem to be many problems remaining for him to face/

26.a4!

Looking for new targets and weaknesses on the queenside and on the light squares in general.

26...b×a4 27.b×a4 ♗c5?!

27...a5 was subsequently recommended as an improvement but after 28.♘b5 ♖×c1 29.♖×c1 ♖e8 White keeps an edge with 30.♔f3. It must be also noted that 27...♗c3?! is no help, especially after 28.♘e2 ♗b2 29.♖d7+ ♔g8 30.♖cc7 ±.

28.♖c4! ♗a3

Black can also transpose into a rook endgame with 28...♗×d4 29.♖c×d4 ♖e8 though after 30.♖b4 White is better in view of the more active position of his rooks and the weakness of the a6-pawn. He will place his rooks on the sixth rank, putting pressure on both Black's a- and e- pawns, and then he will improve the position of his king.

29.♖×c8 ♖×c8 30.♖b1!

Now we see how useful White's 26th move was; his rook is invading via the b-file.

30...♖c4

After 30...♖c7 White penetrates with 31.♖b8 threatening to bring the rook to either h8 or a8.

31.♖b7+ ♗e7 32.♖a7 e5

As Black cannot continue with 32...♖×a4? 33.♘c6 he is forced to create new targets.

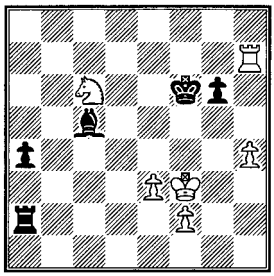
33.f×e5 f×e5 34.♘f3 ♖×a4 35.♘×e5+ ♔f6 36.♘c6 ♗c5

36...♗d6 37.♖×h7 ♖c4 might have made it more difficult for White in view of the danger of Black's passed a-pawn.

37.♖×h7

Finally White has won material, while Black's counterplay doesn't look too serious.

37...♖a2 38.♔f3 a5 39.h4 a4 (D)



40.♔e4!

A tactical improvement of White's position – that's what we call technique; the way to improve the position by using small tactics!

40...♗f8

If 40...♖×f2?, then 41.♘d8, with the threat 42.♖f7#, is decisive.

41.♖a7?!

But here White doesn't react properly. 41.f4 ♗g7 42.h5 g×h5 43.♖×h5± was good.

41...♗d6?!

The final mistake. Black should have gone for 41...♖×f2 42.♘e5 ♖b2 43.♖×a4 ♖b4+ 44.♖×b4 ♗×b4±, when the reduced material offers him fair chances for the draw.

42.f4

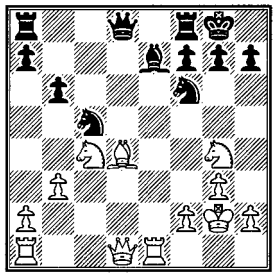
Now Black is simply lost.

42...♖h2

42...a3 43.♘e5! ♗×e5 44.♖a6+ ♔g7 45.♔×e5 +-

43.♖a6 ♔f7 44.♘e5+ ♗×e5 45.♔×e5 ♔g7 46.♖a7+ ♔h6 47.♖×a4 ♖×h4 48.♔f6 ♖h5 49.e4 ♖h4 50.e5 ♖h5 51.e6 ♖f5+ 52.♔e7 ♔g7 53.♔d6 ♖f8 54.♖a7+ ♔f6 55.♖d7 1-0

(138) Torre – Sokolov
London 1984
Queen's Indian Defense [E15]
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗a6 5.b3 ♗b4+ 6.♗d2 ♗e7 7.♗g2 c6 8.♗c3 d5 9.♘bd2 ♗b7 10.♘e5 0-0 11.0-0 ♘a6 12.e4 c5 13.e×d5 e×d5 14.♖e1 c×d4 15.♗×d4 ♘c5 16.♘g4 d×c4 17.♘×c4 ♗×g2 18.♔×g2 (D)



In the mid-1980s, this position (and generally this variation) was in fashion and many important games were played with it.

18...♘e6?!

The main alternative is 18...♘×g4! 19.♕×g4 ♗f6 20.♖ad1 h5! (20...♗×d4?! was played in a famous game: 21.♖×d4 ♕c7 22.♘d6 ♘e6 23.♖×e6 h5 24.♕e4 f×e6 25.♕×e6+± Kasparov-Karpov, Moscow 1984) 21.♗×f6 h×g4 22.♗×d8 ♖a×d8 23.♘e3 ♘d3 24.♖e2 ♘e5 25.♖ed2 ♖×d2 26.♖×d2 g6= Kamsky-Karpov, Elista 1996, but this was a late improvement and the main reason why this variation went out of fashion.

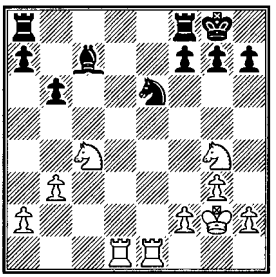
19.♗×f6

Well played. Nothing is gained by the naive 19.♗b2 ♕×d1 20.♘×f6+ ½-½ Schussler-Sokolov, Thessaloniki 1984.

19...♗×f6 20.♕×d8 ♗×d8

An awkward recapture, but Black cannot permit the shattering of his kingside pawns after 20...♖f×d8?! 21.♘×f6+ g×f6 22.♖ad1±.

21.♖ad1 ♗c7 (D)



22.♘ge3

If 22.♖d7 Black can defend with 22...♖ad8 (22...♖fd8?! 23.♖e7 b5 24.♘ce5 ±) 23.♖ed1 (23.♖e7 b5 24.♘a3 [24.♘ce5?! h5] 24...♗a5=) 23...♖×d7 24.♖×d7 ♖d8 25.♖×d8+ ♗×d8 26.♔f3 f5!=.

22...b5!

Black must be active and try to neutralize the superiority of the white knights on the light squares.

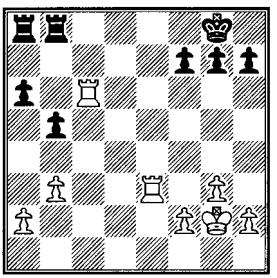
23.♘d6 a6 24.♖d5 ♖fd8

24...♗×d6!? 25.♖×d6 ♖fd8 26.♖ed1 ♔f8 27.f4 is again slightly better for White, but Black might have tried it, as he would be very close to having equalized.

25.♘b7! ♖db8

After 25...♖×d5 26.♘×d5 the white knights are dancing in Black's camp.

26.♘c5 ♘×c5 27.♖×c5 ♗b6 28.♖c6 ♗×e3 29.♖×e3 (D)



More exchanges have taken place, but White still has the advantage, although it is minimal – the respective pawn structures are virtually symmetrical, so only his slightly more active rooks and more mobile king differentiate the two positions.

29...♔f8 30.♖c7 ♖c8

Black's rooks need to "breath"; they cannot stay passive forever on a8 and b8. On the other hand, this exchange gives White's king more freedom to act, as it is no longer in danger from the black rook pair.

31.♖ee7 ♖×c7 32.♖×c7 a5 33.♔f3 ♖a6

33...a4 34.♖b7 a×b3 35.a×b3 h5 leads to an ending which is supposed to be drawish, although in practice it is very difficult for Black.

34.♖c5 b4

34...♖b6 35.♖c8+ ♔e7 36.♖a8 a4 37.b×a4 b×a4 38.♖×a4 h5 is again a mirror case of the comment on the 33rd move.

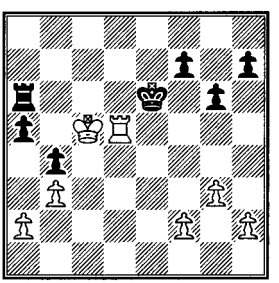
35.♔e4!

It is time for the white king to take over.

35...♔e7 36.♔d4 ♔d6 37.♖g5 g6 38.♖d5+ ♔e6

38...♔c6 was possible. White will try to penetrate on the other side with 39.♔e5 ♖a8 40.♖d2 f5 41.h4 threatening h5 and ♔f6. It is not absolute sure that White can triumph but one must admit that he is on the right track.

39.♔c5 (D)



39...♖a8

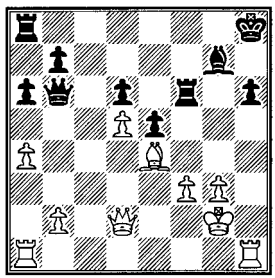
With two moves to go, Black lost on time. White's chances are excellent, since his king will soon reach b5 after 40.♖d2. **1-0**

(139) Timman – Balashov

Sochi 1973

King's Indian Defense [E88]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 0-0 6.♗e3 e5 7.d5 c6 8.♕d2 c×d5 9.c×d5 ♘a6 10.♗b5 ♘h5 11.♘ge2 f5 12.e×f5 g×f5 13.0-0 ♘c7 14.♗c4 ♘f6 15.a4 ♔h8 16.♗g5! ♘ce8 17.♘g3 f4 18.♘ge4 h6 19.♗×f6 ♘×f6 20.♗d3 a6 21.g4 f×g3 22.h×g3 ♘×e4 23.♘×e4 ♗f5 24.♔g2 ♗×e4 25.♗×e4 ♕b6 26.♖h1 ♖f6 (D)



White stands better, as he has the better pawn structure and (what is really important) the better bishop. Actually, White's bishop is his pride, especially compared to its counterpart, as the light squares around the black king are rather weak. But White cannot win only on one side; he has to be global and try his chances everywhere!

27.♖ac1

The first step is taken; the c-file now belongs to White.

27...♖af8 28.♖c4 a5 29.♕c3 ♔g8 30.♖h4!

Caution is required. If White plays 30.b3?! at once, then Black has the stroke 30...♖×f3! 31.♗×f3 e4 giving him dangerous counterplay.

30...♖6f7

If now 30...♖×f3? 31.♗×f3 e4 White would have the finesse 32.♖g4 e×f3+ 33.♔f1 +-.

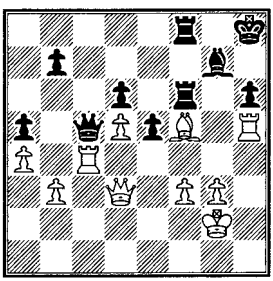
31.b3 ♖f6 32.♕d3 ♔h8 33.♖h5 ♔g8

Black's passivity is obvious; he can practically only move his king, waiting for White to do something. But still is not easy to see how White will benefit from this passivity...

34.♗h7+ ♔h8 35.♗e4 ♔g8 36.♗f5

Probably 36.♖f5, to relieve the pressure against f3, is more accurate, but White had no reason to be in a hurry; Black cannot do anything here, because all his pieces are already in their ideal positions and cannot improve any further!

36...♔h8 37.♖ch4 ♕c5 38.♖c4 (D)



38.♗g6 offers nothing after 38...♔g8 (38...♖×f3? 39.♖×h6+ ♗×h6 40.♖×h6+ ♔g7 41.♖h7+ ♔g8 42.♗f7+! ♖8×f7 43.♕g6+ ♔f8 44.♖h8+ ♔e7 45.♕e6#; 38...♕c1!? ∞) 39.♖c4 ♕a3 40.♗h7+ ♔h8 when White has nothing better than to retreat back: 41.♗e4.

38...♕a3?

Black's first real mistake; he becomes impatient and gives away the g1-a7 diagonal. He should have retreated with 38...♕b6 when White should also retreat with 39.♗e4 and prepare for

♖f5, as noted.

39.g4

Preserving a spot at g3 for the king.

39...♕b2+ 40.♔g3 ♕a1 41.♕e3!

The key move – the white queen is excellently placed here, as it combines attack on both wings while defending its king.

41...♕d1 42.♗e4 ♔g8 43.♖h2?!

White's next step is to drive the black queen back from its active post. Another move in this vein was 43.♔g2! ♖f4 (43...♕a1 44.g5 h×g5 45.♗h7+ ♔f7 46.♖c7+ +−) 44.♖h1 when Black cannot go for 44...♖×g4+ (44...♖×e4 45.♕×e4 ♕d2+ 46.♔g3 ±) 45.f×g4 ♕×g4+ 46.♔h2 +-.

43...♖f4 44.♖hc2 ♕a1 45.♖c1 ♕b2 46.♖h1

The end of the rook maneuver. White aims now to prevent Black's bishop getting to g5, when Black would even have the better game! Nothing would have been gained by the premature 46.♖c8?! ♗f6!.

46...♖8f6 47.♖c7!

Exchanging a pair of rooks will relieve the pressure against f3, easing White's task.

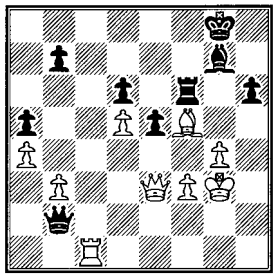
47...♖f7 48.♖×f7 ♖×f7

Not 48...♔×f7?! because after 49.♕b6 the white queen penetrates decisively: 49...♕c3 50.♕×d6 ♖×e4 51.♕e6+ ♔f8 52.♕f5+.

49.♗f5 ♖f6!

The only move, preventing immediate mating threats or heavy material loses.

50.♖c1! (D)



Bad was the tempting 50.♗e6+ ♔h8 51.g5 ♖f4! 52.g×h6 ♗f8 when Black's position is not that bad anymore.

50...e4!

Active defense! After 50...♕d4 51.♕×d4 e×d4 52.♖c7 Black's chances for holding the draw are minimal.

51.f4!

Of course not 51.♗×e4 ♖f8 and White's king is more exposed than Black's. With the text move White stops Black's counterplay.

51...♖f8 52.♖c4 h5

Again adding fuel to the fire.

53.♖×e4

Shattering the pawn formation is unavoidable because 53.♗e6+ ♔h8 54.g5? fails to 54...♖×f4!! 55.♖c8+ (55.♔×f4? ♕e5#; 55.♕×f4 ♗e5 56.♖c8 ±) 55...♖f8 56.♖×f8+ ♗×f8 57.♕×e4 ♕d2=.

53...h×g4 54.♗×g4 ♗h6

If Black wanted to go in for the ending (which he cannot avoid anyway), his best chance is 54...♕c3: the black bishop will reach b4 and even when White wins the pawn on b7, he can fight on as the other pawns are protected in a natural way.

55.♖c4 ♕f6

Slightly better was 55...♔h8 56.♗e6! (56.♕d4+ ♕×d4 57.♖×d4 ♗g7 58.♖c4 ♗b2 59.b4 a×b4 60.♖×b4 ♗c1 61.♗e6 ±) 56...♕g7+ 57.♔f3 ±.

56.♕e6+! ♔h8 57.♕×f6+ ♖×f6 58.♗e6 ♖f8 59.♔g4!

With the charming threat of 60.♔h5 ♗×f4 61.♔g6 and the black king finds itself in a mating net.

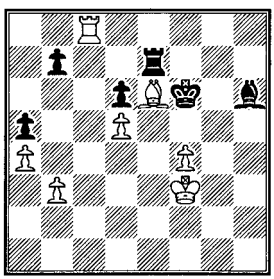
59...♔g7 60.♖e4

60.♖c7+ ♔g6 61.f5+ ♔f6 62.♖×b7 ♗d2! is not that clear; see the note to Black's 54th move.

60...♔f6 61.♔f3 ♖e8 62.♖e2

The pressure against f4 has been reduced, giving White more maneuvering room for his rook.

62...♖e7 63.♖h2 ♗g7 64.♖c2 ♗h6 65.♖c8 (D)



65...b5!?

As the end is in sight, Black plays his last card.

66.♖h8!

66.a×b5?! ♖b7 only helps Black.

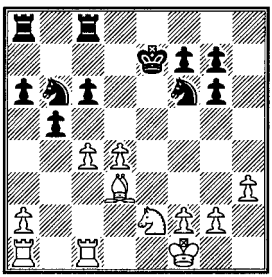
66...♔g7 67.♖g8+ ♔f6 68.♖h8 ♔g7 69.♖d8! b×a4 70.b×a4 ♖b7 71.♖×d6 ♖b4 72.♖d7+ ♔g6 73.♖f7 ♖×a4 74.d6 ♗g7

A pretty finish would occur after 74...♖d4 75.d7 a4 76.♖f5! ♗g7 77.♗d5!+−.

75.f5+ ♔h6 76.f6 1-0

(140) Nikolic – Short
Moscow 1994
Slav Defense [D10]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e3 a6 5.♕c2 b5 6.b3 ♗g4 7.♘ge2 ♘bd7 8.h3 ♗h5 9.♘f4 ♗g6 10.♘×g6 h×g6 11.♗b2 e6 12.♗d3 ♗e7 13.♘e2 ♕a5+ 14.♗c3 ♗b4 15.0-0 ♗×c3 16.♕×c3 ♕×c3 17.♘×c3 ♔e7 18.♖fc1 ♖hc8 19.♘e2 d×c4 20.b×c4 e5 21.♔f1 e×d4 22.e×d4 ♘b6 (D)



White holds a tiny advantage as a result of his somewhat better minor piece and slightly more active pawn structure. But it seems that Black can easily hold...

23.♘g1!?

Heading for f3, where the knight would easily jump to e5 when needed.

23...b×c4

The alternative is 23...c5! 24.♘f3! (24.c×b5?! c4 25.♗e2 a×b5∓ or 24.d×c5 ♖×c5 25.c×b5 ♖×c1+ 26.♖×c1 a×b5=) 24...b×c4 (24...c×d4 25.♖e1+ ♔d6 26.c×b5 a×b5 27.♘×d4±) 25.♗×c4 ♘×c4 (25...c×d4 26.♗b3±) 26.♖×c4 c×d4 27.♖e1+ ♔f8 28.♖×d4 ♖c2 and Black is very near to full equality.

24.♗×c4 ♘×c4

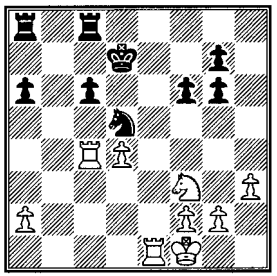
Black did not like to suffer the endgame after 24...c5 25.d×c5 ♖×c5 26.♗b3 (26.♖e1+?! ♔f8 27.♗b3 a5=) 26...♖×c1+ 27.♖×c1 ♖c8 28.♖×c8 ♘×c8 29.♘f3 and this is quite understandable, as the white bishop is a powerful weapon.

25.♖×c4 ♘d5 26.♘f3 f6

Black should not create any further weaknesses in general, but he also couldn't allow a white knight on e5. He

could have opted for 26...♖c7!? ± as an alternative defense.

27.♖e1+ ♔d7 (D)



28.♘d2!

Now the white knight is heading for c5, from where it will be able to attack various important points in Black's camp, such as a6 and e6. Although the black knight seems to be very strongly placed in the center, it is actually doing nothing serious, as it attacks no important point in White's camp. So, the black knight is doing an illusionary job! If you add to the above the more active white rooks and White's somewhat better pawn structure, it will be easily understood why White holds a nice advantage.

28...♘c7

28...♖ab8 29.♘b3 ♔d6 30.♘c5 ± was also possible.

29.♘b3 ♖ab8

After 29...♘e6 30.♖c3 and ♖ce3, White stands better.

30.♖c3 ♖e8

Black must be on the alert: 30...♘d5? 31.♘c5+ ♔d6 32.♖e6+ ♔c7 33.♘×a6+ ± .

31.♖ec1 ♖b6 32.h4

Now it is White's time to be on the alert: 32.♖g3 g5 33.h4? ♖h8! 34.h×g5 ♖×b3! −+ . Winning a pawn does not always guarantee a win: 32.♘c5+ ♔d8 33.♘a4 ♖b4 34.♖×c6 ♖×a4 35.♖×c7 ♖×a2 36.♖c8+ ♔d7 37.♖1c7+ ♔d6 38.♖×e8 ♔×c7 39.♖e7+ ♔d6 40.♖×g7 g5=. With the text move White fixes Black's weakness on g6.

32...♖h8

32...♘d5 33.♖g3! ♘e7 34.♖g4 ± still keeps White's pressure alive.

33.g3 ♘d5 34.♖3c2 ♖e8

34...♘b4?! 35.♘c5+ ♔d8 36.♖b2 ± or 34...♖hb8?! 35.♔g2 ±

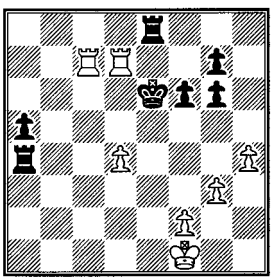
35.♘c5+ ♔d8

35...♔d6?! 36.♘a4 ♖b4 37.♖×c6+ ±

36.a3! a5 37.♘a4 ♖b3 38.♖×c6 ♖×a3 39.♖6c5

Black can defend after 39.♘c5?! ♔e7! 40.♖b1 ♔f7 ∞ .

39...♔e7 40.♖×d5 ♖×a4 41.♖c7+ ♔e6 42.♖dd7 (D)



White has achieved the best out of his position, but of course Black can still defend. This is easier said than done though, as very accurate handling (and suffering) is essential.

42...♔f5

A serious option was 42...♖g8, but White can still stay on top with accurate play: 43.g4! g5 44.h5! (44.♖e7+ ♔d5 45.♖cd7+ [45.h×g5 f×g5 46.♖×g7 ♖×g7 47.♖×g7 ♔e4! ∞ /=] 45...♔c4 46.h×g5 f×g5 47.♖×g7 ♖×g7 48.♖×g7 ♖a1+ 49.♔g2 a4 50.♖×g5 a3 51.♖a5 ♔b3! [51...a2? 52.g5 ♔b3 53.g6 ♖c1 54.f4 a1♕ 55.♖×a1 ♖×a1 56.f5 ♖a8 57.f6 ♖g8 58.g7 ♔c4 59.♔f3 ♔d5 60.f7 +−] 52.g5 ♖d1 53.g6 ♖×d4 54.♔f3 ♖d6 55.g7 ♖g6 56.♖a7 a2 57.♔e4 ♖×g7=) 44...g6 45.h6 ♖b4

46.h7 ♖h8 47.♖g7 ♔d5 48.♖a7+−. Black could take into account the immediate 42...g5!?, but White can prove an advantage: 43.h5! (43.h×g5?! f×g5 44.♖×g7 ♖×d4 45.♖×g5 ♖a8∞/=) 43...♖h8 44.g4 ♖b4 45.♖×g7 ♖×d4 46.♖ge7+ ♔d5 47.♖ed7+ ♔e4 48.f3+ ♔d3 49.♖×d4+ ♔×d4 50.♖a7±.

43.♖c5+ ♔e4

Or 43...♔e6? 44.♖×g7 ♖×d4 45.♖×a5 ♖g4 46.♔g2+−.

44.♖×g7 ♔×d4 45.♖c1 ♖f8?!

45...♖a2? 46.♖d7+ ♔e5 47.♖e1++− was easy, but Black had to opt for 45...g5! 46.h×g5 f×g5 47.♖×g5 ♖a2, when he could find counterplay based on his active king and rooks, as well as his passed a-pawn.

46.♖×g6 ♔e5 47.♖g7 f5 48.♔g2 ♖a2

48...f4 49.g4 f3+ 50.♔g3 +- or 48...♖d4 49.♖c5+ ♖d5 50.♖×d5+ ♔×d5 51.♖a7+− was curtains anyway.

49.♖d7! a4

Or 49...♔e6 50.♖a7 ♔d5 51.♖d1+ ♔c5 52.h5+−.

50.♖e1+ ♔f6 51.♖de7 ♔g6?!

51...♖f7 52.♖7e6+ ♔g7 53.♖a6 ♔h7 54.♖ee6 +-

52.♖1e6+ ♖f6 53.h5+

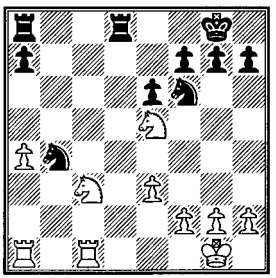
Black resigned in view of 53...♔g5 54.♖g7+ ♔h6 55.♖×f6+ ♔×g7 56.♖×f5+−. **1-0**

(141) Grivas – Solak

Kallithea 2007

Slav Defense [D15]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.♘c3 d×c4 5.e3 b5 6.a4 b4 7.♘b1 ♗a6 8.♗e2 e6 9.♘bd2 c3 10.b×c3 b×c3 11.♘b1 ♗b4 12.0-0 c5 13.♗a3 0-0 14.♗×a6 ♘×a6 15.♕d3 ♕a5 16.♖c1 ♖fc8 17.♘×c3 c×d4 18.♗×b4 ♘×b4 19.♕×d4 ♖d8 20.♕e5 ♕×e5 21.♘×e5 (D)



White's knights seem to be a bit better placed, as the one on e5 already is creating some threats and the other is ready to come and help (to b5), also attacking the queenside. But Black can defend, neutralizing White's knights' temporary activity.

21...♖ac8?!

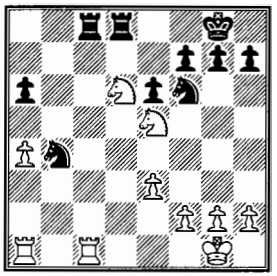
Although the text move cannot be considered a real mistake, Black could have been more accurate and kept approximate equality by exchanging the strong e5-knight for his "useless" f6-knight: 21...♘d7! 22.♘×d7 ♖×d7 23.♘e4 ♘d3 24.♘c5 ♘×c5 25.♖×c5 ♔f8=, but not by exchanging his other knight with 21...♘d3?! 22.♘×d3 ♖×d3 23.♘b5 ♔f8 24.♖c7 a6 25.♘d4 ♘d5 26.♖b7±.

22.♘b5! a6?!

Black could hardly defend with 22...♘fd5?! 23.♖×c8 ♖×c8 24.♘×a7! (24.♘×f7 a6 [24...♔×f7? 25.♘d6+] 25.♘bd6 ♖c6! [25...♖c2?! 26.♘g5±] 26.a5 [26.h4 a5 27.g3 ♔f8 28.e4 ♘c3 29.♖a3 ♔e7 30.e5 ♖c7∞/=] 26...♘d3 27.g3 ♔f8 28.e4 ♘c3 29.♖a3±) 24...♖c5! 25.♘b5 ♘b6 26.f4! (26.♖b1 ♘×a4 27.♘d6 f6 28.♘ec4 ♘a6=) 26...f6 27.♖b1 f×e5 28.♖×b4 e×f4 29.e×f4 ♘d5 (29...♘×a4? 30.♘d6+−) 30.♖e4±, but he should do it with 22...♖×c1+ 23.♖×c1 ♘fd5! (23...a6? 24.♘d6±) 24.♔f1! (24.♘×a7?! ♘c3! 25.♔f1 ♘×a4 26.♖c7 f6 27.♘ac6 ♘×c6 28.♘×c6

♖d1+ 29.♔e2 ♘c3+ 30.♔f3 ♘d5=) 24...a5 25.♖c5±.

23.♘d6! (D)



23...♘c2?

Black was shocked and did not find the most stubborn defense with 23...♖×c1+ 24.♖×c1 ♘a2 25.♖c6 (25.♖c4? ♘e4!!) 25...♘e8 26.♘e×f7 ♖b8 27.♔f1 ♘b4 28.♖c1±. Actually, his last move was a clear blunder.

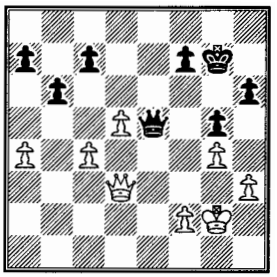
24.♘×c8 ♘×a1 25.♘e7+ ♔f8 26.♖×a1!

Simple and effective. Black was only counting on 26.♘7c6? ♘b3, although White still keeps the advantage: 27.♘×d8 ♘×c1 28.♘d×f7.

26...♔×e7 27.♘c6+ ♔d7 28.♘×d8 ♔×d8 29.♔f1 ♔c7 30.♖b1 ♘e4 31.♖b4 1-0

(142) Howell – Gelfand
Amsterdam 2010
Petroff Defense [C42]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘×e5 d6 4.♘f3 ♘×e4 5.d4 d5 6.♗d3 ♘c6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.c4 ♘b4 9.♗e2 0-0 10.♘c3 ♗f5 11.a3 ♘×c3 12.b×c3 ♘c6 13.♖e1 ♖e8 14.c×d5 ♕×d5 15.♗f4 ♖ac8 16.h3 h6 17.g4 ♗g6 18.♗d3 ♗×d3 19.♕×d3 ♕d7 20.d5 ♗f6 21.♖×e8+ ♖×e8 22.♖b1 ♘e7 23.c4 ♘g6 24.♗g3 b6 25.♕f5 ♕d8 26.a4 ♘h4 27.♕d3 ♘×f3+ 28.♕×f3 ♗e5 29.♖e1 ♗×g3 30.♖×e8+ ♕×e8 31.♕×g3 ♕e1+ 32.♔h2 ♕e7 33.♕f4 g5 34.♕f5 ♔g7 35.♕d3 ♕e5+ 36.♔g2 (D)



Many players would offer a draw here, but Gelfand correctly decided that he would risk little by playing on. After all, Black's pawn structure is slightly better (2 pawn islands vs. White's 3).

36...f5!

Black gains more space and provoke White to more weaknesses.

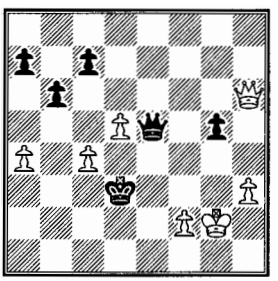
37.g×f5

What else? White cannot stay put: 37.♕c2 ♔f6 38.♕d3? ♕e4+! 39.♕×e4 (39.♕f3 a5-+) 39...f×e4-+.

37...♔f6 38.♕a3!

A correct reaction – White is obliged to be aggressive and seek counterplay by activating his queen.

38...♔×f5 39.♕f8+ ♔e4 40.♕×h6 ♔d3 (D)



Black sacrificed a pawn in order to give to his king mobility and now he is ready to start the harvest. White must be on the alert.

41.♕e6!

41.♕c6 also seems to be good: 41...♕e4+ (41...♔d4 42.♔f3 ♕f4+ 43.♔g2=) 42.f3 ♕×c4 43.♕g6+ ♔c3 44.♕×g5 ♔b3 45.h4 ♕e2±.

41...♕f4 42.a5 ♕×c4

After the naive 42...♔×c4? White can even win: 43.a×b6 a×b6 44.d6+ +–.

43.a×b6 a×b6 44.♕e3+ ♔c2 45.♕×g5

Now both sides have achieved passed pawns – the race begins!

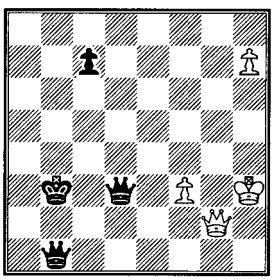
45...b5 46.h4 b4 47.h5 b3 48.h6 ♕d3!

Despite the extra pawn, White has to defend.

49.♕g7 b2 50.h7 ♕×d5+ 51.f3 ♕d2+ 52.♔h3

White could also play 52.♔g3! though then he had to calculate the following long line: 52...b1♕ 53.♕g6+ ♕d3 54.♕×d3+ ♔×d3 55.h8♕ ♕g1+ 56.♔f4 ♕d4+ (56...c5!?∓) 57.♕×d4+ ♔×d4 58.♔g5 c5 59.f4 c4 60.f5 c3 61.f6 c2 62.f7 c1♕+ 63.♔g6=.

52...b1♕ 53.♕g6+ ♕d3 54.♕g2+ ♔b3 (D)



55.h8♕?

And the "pressure" paid off! Correct was 55.♕g8+! ♕c4 56.♕b8+ ♔c2 57.♕×b1+ ♔×b1 58.h8♕=.

55...♕f5+

Material is equal but with four queens on the board the most important factor is who is on move.

56.♔h2

56.♕g4 ♕h1+ 57.♔g3 ♕×g4+ 58.f×g4 ♕×h8

56...♕f4+ 57.♕g3

57.♔h3 ♕bf5+ 58.♕g4 ♕×f3+

57...♕c2+ 58.♔h3 ♕cf5+ 59.♔h2

59.♔g2 ♕d2+ 60.♕f2 ♕g6+

59...♕d2+ 60.♔h1

60.♕g2 ♕ff4+ 61.♔h3 (61.♔h1 ♕d1+ 62.♕g1 ♕f×f3+ 63.♔h2 ♕de2+) 61...♕d7+ 62.♕g4 ♕×f3+

60...♕d1+ 61.♔h2 ♕e2+ 62.♕g2 ♕f4+ 63.♔h3 ♕e6+

And White resigned in view of 64.♕g4 ♕×f3+ **0-1**

Conclusion

A small advantage does not guarantee victory, but with it, we must press ahead; it is up to us to make full use of it.

The Endgame

Keep Your Rooks Active!

Concept

As I have explained in my books, there are five basic principles that must be followed faithfully in rook endings:

1. *Rook behind the pawn*: The placement of the rooks in relation to the pawns is very significant. The rook must be placed behind the pawn, whether the pawn is ours or the opponent's. With every move the pawn makes, the radius of our rook will increase and that of the opponent's will decrease.

2. *Active rook*: In all rook endings, the active handling of the rook is almost always the indicated course of action. The initiative and attacking possibilities must always figure in our plans and moves.

3. *Active king*: As in all endings, the active king has the first say, as the endgame is its finest hour. Particularly when it can cooperate harmoniously with the rook, it can dynamically help

us solve the problems posed by the position.

4. *Planning*: Our moves must be part of one or more plans. Active plans must be directed towards the sector of the board where we are superior and, correspondingly, defensive plans must be directed towards the area where we are inferior.

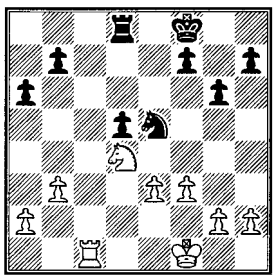
5. *Combination of all the above*: When we are able to combine all of the above-mentioned elements, then we will be able to extract the maximum from our position!

Mark Dvoretsky makes a general comment: "Rook activity is the cornerstone in the evaluation and play of rook endgames. This activity may take diverse forms: from attacking the enemy pawns, to the support of one's own passed pawns, to the interdiction or pursuit of the enemy king. There are indeed times when the rook must remain passive, and implement purely defensive functions. But even then, one must stubbornly seek out any possibility of activating the rook, not even stopping at sacrificing pawns, or making your own king's position worse."

In this survey we will examine (with the help of three very good and similar enough examples) the value of active rooks. All of the above principles can be found in these examples...

(143) Flohr – Vidmar
Nottingham 1936
Queen's Gambit Declined [D62]

1.c4 e6 2.♘c3 d5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗e7 5.e3 0-0 6.♘f3 ♘bd7 7.♕c2 c5 8.c×d5 ♘×d5 9.♗×e7 ♕×e7 10.♘×d5 e×d5 11.♗d3 g6 12.d×c5 ♘×c5 13.0-0 ♗g4 14.♘d4 ♖ac8 15.♕d2 a6 16.♗c2 ♕g5 17.f3 ♗d7 18.♖fe1 ♖fd8 19.♖ad1 ♕f6 20.♗b3 ♗a4 21.♗×a4 ♘×a4 22.♖c1 ♘c5 23.♖ed1 ♕b6 24.♘e2 ♘d7 25.♕d4 ♕×d4 26.♘×d4 ♘e5 27.b3 ♔f8 28.♔f1 ♖×c1 29.♖×c1 (D)



29...♘c6?!

Although White has been able to make things go just as he wished, it is still doubtful whether he could have achieved more than a draw after 29...♔e7. Now he has the opportunity to transform one type of advantage into another.

30.♘×c6 ♖c8 31.♖c5?!

Correct was 31.♔e2! b×c6 (31...♖×c6? 32.♖×c6 b×c6 33.b4! ♔e7 34.♔d3 ♔d6 35.♔d4 and White holds a typically winning position) 32.♖c5 transposing.

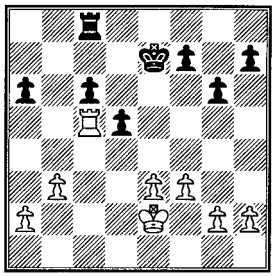
31...b×c6?!

Black did not make use of his opportunity. Here, better was 31...♖×c6 32.♖×c6 (better is 32.♖×d5 although after 32...♖c2, Black's active rook compensates for the loss of the pawn) 32...b×c6 33.b4 ♔e7 34.♔e2 ♔d6 35.♔d3 c5 36.b×c5+ ♔×c5 37.♔c3 a5 reaching a drawn ending.

32.♔e2!

King centralization is rather important. After 32.♖a5?! c5! 33.♖×a6 c4, Black sacrifices a pawn, activates his forces, and draws without trouble. Another inaccurate move would be 32.b4?! ♔e7 33.♔e2 ♔d6 34.♔d3 ♖b8 35.a3 ♖b5, when Black will have no problems maintaining equality.

32...♔e7 (D)



The black d-pawn is no longer isolated, but instead Black is saddled with an isolated a-pawn, together with a backward c-pawn.

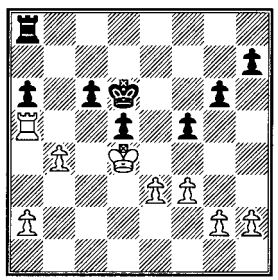
33.♔d3 ♔d6 34.♖a5!

But not 34.♔d4?!, in view of 34...♖b8 35.♖a5 c5+! 36.♔d3 ♖b6=.

34...♖a8 35.♔d4

Now Black has to watch out for the future e4-advance. It was too early for that, as after 35.e4 d×e4+ 36.♔×e4 ♔c7 37.♔e5 ♔b6 38.b4 ♖e8+ Black would attack White's kingside pawns.

35...f5 36.b4 (D)



36...♖b8?

Passive play cannot be helpful! The a6-pawn had to be defended by the king to allow the black rook to become active. So, Black had to go in for 36...♔c7! 37.♔c5 ♔b7 38.♔d6 ♖e8 39.♖a3 (intending ♖c3) and now:

(a) 39...f4? 40.e×f4 ♖e2 41.g4 ♖×h2 42.f5+− as Black cannot defend against the passed white f-pawn;

(b) 39...d4 40.e×d4 ♖e2 41.♖c3 ♖×g2 (41...♖d2 42.♖c4) 42.♖×c6 ♖×h2 43.a4 g5 44.♖c7+! ♔b6 45.♖g7 and White retains the advantage, since his passed d-pawn is quite dangerous;

(c) 39...g5! (this simple move has, for some reason, been overlooked in the endgame books) 40.♖c3 (40.g3 g4! [40...d4?! 41.e×d4 ♖e2 42.♖a5! h6 43.a4! (43.♖×f5 ♖×a2 44.♖f7+ ♔b6 45.♖c7 ♖×h2 46.♖×c6+ ♔b5 47.d5±) 43...♖b2 44.♖×f5 ♖×b4 45.♔c5 ♖×a4 46.♖f7+±] 41.f4 [41.f×g4 f×g4 42.♖c3 ♖f8=] 41...♖e4 42.♖c3 ♖c4=) 40...f4 41.e×f4 g×f4 42.♖×c6 ♖d8+ 43.♔c5 d4 44.♖e6 d3 45.♖e1 ♖g8=.

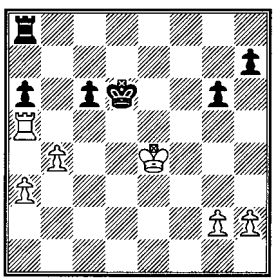
37.a3 ♖a8

The alternative was 37...♖b6, but here the black rook might even stand worse than it does on a8.

38.e4!

A seemingly illogical move but Black has only one "real" weakness on a6 and White exchanges his weak e3-pawn, activates his king and rook along the fifth rank and then sets about creating weaknesses for the opponent on the kingside. He executes a standard technique, called "enlarging the battlefield!."

38...f×e4 39.f×e4 d×e4 40.♔×e4 (D)



40...♖a7?!

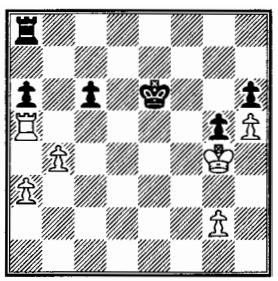
Black continues to wait and see. Here again, it was necessary to free the rook from the defense of the pawn, by sending the king over to b6: 40...♔c7! 41.♖e5! (41.♔f4? ♖f8+ 42.♔g3 ♔b6= is bad but probably playable is 41.h4!?

♔b6 42.g4 [42.♔f4? ♖d8 43.♔g5 ♖d3 44.g4 ♖d4 45.h5 ♖e4=] 42...♖f8 43.h5±) 41...♔b6 42.g4 (42.♖e7? a5! 43.♖×h7 a×b4 44.a×b4 ♖a4 45.♖g7 ♖×b4+ 46.♔f3 ♖h4! 47.h3 ♖h6 48.♔g4 c5 49.♔g5 ♖h8 50.♖×g6+ ♔b5 51.♖g7 c4=) 42...♖f8 (42...a5? 43.♖×a5 ♖×a5 44.b×a5+ ♔×a5 45.♔d4+−) 43.a4±.

41.♔f4 h6

Otherwise the king enters decisively on h6: 41...♖a8 42.♔g5 ♖a7 43.♔h6 ♔e6 44.g4 ♔d6 45.h4 ♔e6 46.g5 ♔d6 47.a4+−.

42.h4! ♔e6 43.♔g4 ♖a8 44.h5! g5 (D)



Or 44...g×h5+ 45.♔×h5 ♖g8 46.g4+−.

45.g3!

White has created and fixed a third weakness, the h6-pawn. After returning his king to the center, he has taken the f4-square under control. 45.♔f3? would have been less accurate, in view of 45...♖f8+ 46.♔e4 ♖f4+.

45...♖a7 46.♔f3!

Now the king is transferred to the other flank.

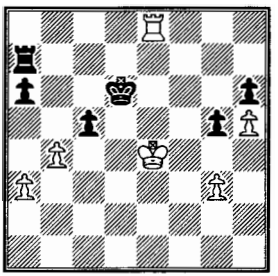
46...♖a8 47.♔e4 ♖a7 48.♔d4 ♔d6 49.♔e4 ♔e6 50.♖e5+!

And Black's choices are not helpful; he will either allow a rook on e8 or a king on f5.

50...♔d6

If 50...♔f6, then 51.♖c5 ♖c7 52.♖a5 ♖a7 53.♔d4 ♔e6 54.♔c5 ♖d7 55.♖×a6 ♖d3 56.♖×c6+ ♔f7 57.a4 ♖×g3 58.♖×h6+−.

51.♖e8 c5 (D)



The pawn ending after 51...♖e7+ 52.♖×e7 ♔×e7 53.♔e5 is hopeless.

52.♖d8+! ♔c6

After 52...♔c7 53.♖h8 Black can resign: 53...c×b4 54.♖h7+ (54.a×b4+−) 54...♔b8 55.♖×a7 ♔×a7 56.a×b4 ♔b6 57.♔f5 ♔b5 58.♔g6 ♔×b4 59.♔×h6 a5 60.♔×g5 a4 61.h6 a3 62.h7 a2 63.h8♕.

53.♖c8+ ♔b6 54.♖×c5 ♖h7

From one pathetic post to another!

55.♖e5 ♔c6 56.♖e6+ ♔b5 57.♔f5 ♖f7+ 58.♖f6

And Black wisely resigned. **1-0**

(144) Dreev – Chandler

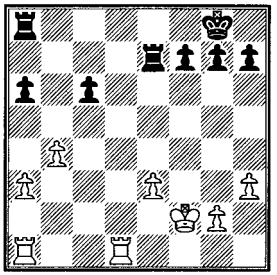
Hastings 2000

Queen's Gambit Declined [D37]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗e7 5.♗f4 0-0 6.e3 c5 7.d×c5 ♗×c5 8.a3 ♘c6 9.c×d5 ♘×d5 10.♘×d5 e×d5 11.♗d3 ♗b6 12.0-0 ♗g4 13.h3 ♗h5 14.b4 a6 15.♗e2 d4 16.e×d4 ♗×f3 17.♗×f3 ♕×d4 18.♗e3 ♕×d1 19.♖f×d1 ♗×e3 20.f×e3 ♖fe8 21.♔f2 ♖e7 22.♗×c6 b×c6 (D)

The weak pawns on a6 and c6 are the cornerstones of Black's problems. Here he has an extra target to aim for; the weak e-pawn, butthis doesn't seem to be enough.

23.♖d6!



The right follow-up. Wrong would be 23.♖ac1?! because of 23...♖e6!.

23...♖c8

23...a5 is not helpful in view of 24.♖×c6 a×b4 25.a×b4± ♖×a1? 26.♖c8+. Black could also think to "be active" with 23...♖ae8 but after 24.♖×c6 (24.♖e1? ♖e6 25.♖×e6 ♖×e6 26.♖c1 ♔f8 27.♖c5 ♖f6+ 28.♔e2 ♖g6=) 24...♖×e3 25.♖×a6 ♖e2+ 26.♔f1 ♖b2! (26...h5 27.♖a8! +−) 27.♖e1 ♖c8 28.♖c6! (28.♖e2?! ♖b1+ 29.♔f2 h5±) 28...♖a8 29.♖ec1! and after the exchange of one pair of rooks, White wins.

24.♖c1 ♖ec7 25.♖c5

The presence of an extra pair of rooks is in White's interest in this specific position, as both his rooks are significantly more active than their black counterparts.

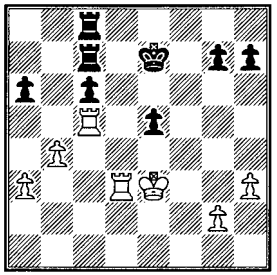
25...♔f8 26.e4!

Preparing the protection of the d6-rook.

26...♔e7 27.e5 f6

Black has to kick the d6-rook and this is his only way. But White succeeds in exchanging his only weakness and reaches an ending as in the previous example. If Black stays put, then White will activate his king and he will push his kingside pawns creating some extra weaknesses on the kingside.

28.♖d3! f×e5 29.♔e3 (D)



29...♔f6?!

29...♖d7 30.♖×e5+ ♔d8 holds out longer: 31.♖h5 h6 32.♖a5 ♖a8 33.♖×d7+ ♔×d7 34.♔e4±. The king has to defend the weak pawns in order to liberate the rooks' activity.

30.♔e4 g6 31.♖dc3!

The game is practically decided, since Black's king is now cut-off from its weak pawns.

31...♔e6 32.♖×e5+ ♔f6 33.♖f3+ ♔g7 34.♔d4

It's time for the white king to do its job, penetrate via the a-file.

34...♖d7+ 35.♔c4 ♖b8 36.♖c5 ♖b6 37.♔b3! ♖d6 38.♔a4 h5 39.h4 ♖d7

Or 39...♖e6 40.♔a5 ♖b5+ 41.♔×a6+−.

40.♔a5 ♖b8 41.♖×c6

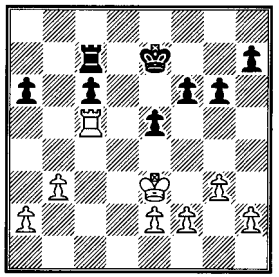
The weak black pawns start falling – the rest was rather easy:

41...♔h6 42.♔×a6 ♖d2 43.♖g3 ♖g8 44.b5 ♖d4 45.b6 ♖a4+ 46.♔b5 ♖×h4 47.b7 ♖h1 48.♖c8 ♖b1+ 49.♔a6 1-0

(145) Nikolic – Movsesian
Polanica Zdroj 1996
English Opening [A46]

1.d4 e6 2.♘f3 c5 3.g3 c×d4 4.♘×d4 a6 5.♗g2 ♘f6 6.0-0 d5 7.c4 d×c4 8.♕a4+ ♘bd7 9.♕×c4 ♘b6 10.♕b3 e5 11.♘f3 ♗e6 12.♕c2 ♖c8 13.♘c3 ♕c7 14.♘g5

♗d5 15.♗h3 ♖d8 16.♗e3 ♗c6 17.♖ad1 ♖×d1 18.♖×d1 ♘c4 19.♗c1 ♘d6 20.♘d5 ♕a5 21.♘c3 ♗e7 22.♗g2 ♗×g2 23.♔×g2 ♕c5 24.♕a4+ ♕c6+ 25.♕×c6+ b×c6 26.♘f3 ♘d7 27.b3 f6 28.♘a4 ♔f7 29.♗a3 ♔e6 30.♘e1 ♘b7 31.♗×e7 ♔×e7 32.♘c2 ♘bc5 33.♘×c5 ♘×c5 34.♘e3 ♘e4 35.♘f5+ ♔f7 36.♔f3 ♘g5+ 37.♔e3 g6 38.♘d6+ ♔e7 39.♘b7 ♘e6 40.♖c1 ♖c8 41.♖c4 ♖c7 42.♘c5 ♘×c5 43.♖×c5 (D)



Exchanges haven't helped Black dramatically; even the rook endgame is very difficult for him.

43...♔d6?!

Black should try 43...h5!, as now his h-pawn will be rather weak.

44.♖a5 ♖a7 45.g4!

An important move, keeping Black's h-pawn at bay. White's plan now is to gradually strengthen his position on both flanks (b4, a3 and h4) and by advancing his kingside pawns to create even more weak points in Black's position. Black has very little counterplay.

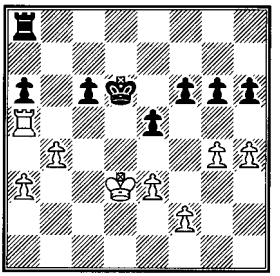
45...h6

45...c5? loses to 46.♔d3 ♔c6 47.♔c4+−.

46.h4 ♖a8

Black is obliged to wait, as 46...f5? also does not help: 47.g×f5 g×f5 48.f4! winning a pawn.

47.b4 ♖a7 48.a3 ♖a8 49.♔d3 ♖a7 50.e3 ♖a8 (D)



51.f4!

As in the previous examples, White must create entrance points for his king, so exchanging some pawns is obligatory.

51...e×f4

Forced. If 51...♖a7, then 52.f×e5+ f×e5 53.♔e4+−.

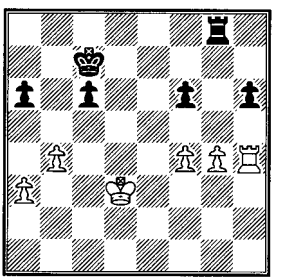
52.e×f4 ♔c7 53.h5!

As Black's two weaknesses on a6 and c6 would not mean anything here, White creates a third one on the kingside. Also good was 53.♔e4 ♔b6 54.h5±.

53...g×h5

If 53...g5, then after 54.♔e4, the king breaks through to the black pawns. 53...♖g8 also doesn't help: 54.♖×a6 g×h5 55.g×h5 ♖g4 56.♔e4+−.

54.♖×h5 ♖g8 55.♖h4! (D)



Bad would be 55.♖×h6? ♖×g4 56.♖×f6 ♖g3+ 57.♔e4 ♖×a3 with a drawn ending. The passivity of the white rook is provisional upon the arrival of the white king to the defense.

55...♔d7?!

Too passive. Black had to try to be active by playing 55...f5!? 56.g×f5 ♖g3+ (56...♖h8 57.♖h5 ♔d6 58.♔e4 ♖h7 59.f6 ♔e6 60.♖c5 ♖c7 61.♖f5! [61.a4? ♔×f6 62.b5 a×b5 63.a×b5 ♖e7+=] 61...♖f7 62.♖e5+ ♔×f6 63.♖f5+ ♔e6 64.♖×f7 ♔×f7 65.♔f5+−) 57.♔e4 ♖×a3 although he would probably lose after 58.f6!.

56.♔e4 ♔e6 57.♔f3

Now the white rook can again become active.

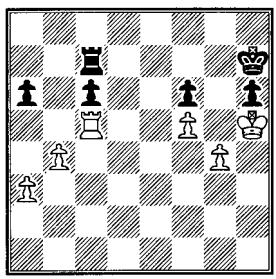
57...♖h8 58.♖h5 ♖h7 59.♔g3

Planning ♖a5 and ♔h4-h5. White has achieved an ideal position, while Black has only weak pawns. Black is condemned to passivity with no hope for a good result...

59...♖d7 60.♖a5! ♖a7 61.♔h4 ♔f7 62.♔h5 ♔g7 63.f5 ♔h7

63...♔f7 loses to 64.♖c5! (64.♔×h6 ♖a8 65.♔h7 ♖g8 66.♖×a6 ♖×g4 67.♖a7+ ♔f8 68.♖c7 also wins) 64...♖c7 65.a4+−.

64.♖c5 ♖c7 (D)



65.a4! ♔g7

After 65...♖b7 66.♖×c6 ♖×b4 67.♖×a6 White wins easily.

66.b5 a×b5 67.a×b5 ♖b7 68.b×c6 ♖c7 69.♖c1 ♖c8

Or 69...♔h7 70.♖d1 ♖×c6 71.♖d7+ ♔g8 72.♔g6 ♔f8 73.♖f7+ ♔e8 74.♖×f6 ♖c4 75.♔h5+−.

70.c7 ♔f7 71.♖c6 ♔g7 72.♔h4 ♔f7 73.♔g3 1-0

And Black resigned as after 73...♔e7 74.♔f4 (planning ♔e4-d5) 74...♔d7 75.♖×f6+− White wins.

Conclusion

Keep your rooks active; if you do not know why, they do! (or probably you will find out too late why you should have...).

A Trapped Rook

Concept

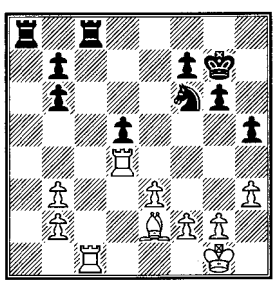
Again, a simple concept: a pawn permanently traps an unfortunate rook and then the king finishes the job. I witnessed the first example; the next I created and the other three I came across in magazines...

(146) Miles – Gdanski

Iraklio 1993

Queen's Pawn Game [D03]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.c3 ♗g7 4.♗g5 0-0 5.♘bd2 d5 6.e3 ♘bd7 7.♗e2 ♖e8 8.0-0 e5 9.♘b3 c6 10.♖c1 ♕b6 11.♘fd2 ♘f8 12.d×e5 ♖×e5 13.♗f4 ♖e8 14.c4 ♕d8 15.♗g3 h5 16.h3 ♘e6 17.c×d5 c×d5 18.♗e5 ♗d7 19.♘f3 ♕b6 20.♕d2 ♗a4 21.♕a5 ♗×b3 22.♕×b6 a×b6 23.a×b3 ♘d7 24.♗×g7 ♔×g7 25.♖fd1 ♘f6 26.♘d4 ♘×d4 27.♖×d4 ♖ec8 (D)



28.♖b1!

Impressive – White understands that Black will get sufficient

counterplay with the exchange of one pair of rooks, so he preserves them! One of his rooks will defend and other will attack the opponent's weaknesses.

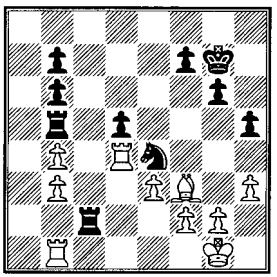
28...♖c2 29.♗f3 ♖a5?!

The start of a wrong plan. Black had to opt for 29...♖ac8 30.g4 h×g4 31.h×g4 ±.

30.b4! ♖b5

30...♖a2 31.♗×d5 ♘×d5 32.♖×d5 ±

31.b3 ♘e4 (D)



32.♖e1!

A very strong move, probably missed by Black when he was thinking about ...♖a5-b5.

32...♖d2

Black cannot take the f2-pawn any way: 32...♘×f2? 33.♖e2 +– ; or 32...♖×f2? 33.♗×e4, while White threatens ♗e2!. But Black probably should choose 32...♘c3 33.g4 h×g4 34.h×g4 when White is on top but nothing is clear-cut yet.

33.♖d1! ♖×d1+?

The lesser evil was 33...♖b2 34.♗×e4 d×e4 35.♖×e4 ♖×b3 36.♖dd4 ♖b2 37.g4 h×g4 38.h×g4 ±.

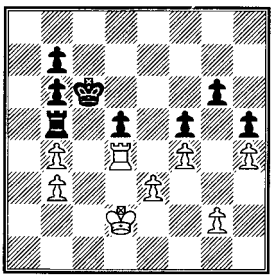
34.♗×d1 ♘c3 35.♗f3 ♔f6 36.♔f1 ♔e5 37.♗e2!

Another exchange that increases the quarantined rook's misery.

37...♘×e2 38.♔×e2 f5 39.f4+ ♔d6 40.h4!

Cutting off any counterplay.

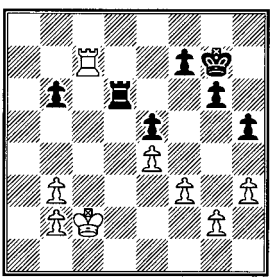
40...♔c6 41.♔d2 1-0 (D)



And Black resigned, as White's plan is simple: he will bring his king to a4 and while the black king will be on c6, the move g3 will create *zugzwang* and eventually the win of the unfortunate black rook.

(147) Grivas – Klokas
Athens 2007
King's Indian Defense [E90]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.h3 e5 7.d×e5 d×e5 8.♕×d8 ♖×d8 9.♗g5 ♖e8 10.♘d5 ♘×d5 11.c×d5 c6 12.♗c4 ♘d7 13.d×c6 b×c6 14.♗e3 ♘b6 15.♗b3 ♗e6 16.♘d2 ♗f8 17.♔e2 ♗×b3 18.a×b3 ♗b4 19.♖hc1 ♗×d2 20.♔×d2 ♖ed8+ 21.♔e2 ♖dc8 22.♗×b6 a×b6 23.♖×a8 ♖×a8 24.♖×c6 ♖a2 25.♖c2 ♖a1 26.f3 ♖a7 27.♖c8+ ♔g7 28.♔d3 ♖d7+ 29.♔c2 ♖d6 30.♖c7 h5 (D)



White is a pawn up and his rook is active, but there seems to be no win in sight.

31.b4! ♖d4?

Falling straight into the trap! Black had to play 31...♔f6 32.b5 h4 33.♔c3 (33.♖c6? ♖×c6+ 34.b×c6 ♔e7 35.b4 b5) 33...♔e6 34.♖c8±.

32.b5 ♖b4

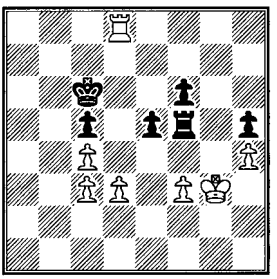
There would be no salvation either with 32...♖d8 33.♖c6 ♖b8 34.♔c3 but nevertheless Black had to try this.

33.♔c3 ♖×b5 34.b4! 1-0

The rook is trapped and it will be captured soon. Black resigned.

(148) McShane – Gordon
Hinckley Island 2009
Sicilian Defense [B50]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e5 d×e5 5.♘×e5 ♘bd7 6.♘c4 e6 7.♗e2 ♘b6 8.b3 ♗e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♗f3 ♘fd5 11.♗b2 ♘×c3 12.♗×c3 ♘×c4 13.b×c4 ♗f6 14.♗×f6 ♕×f6 15.♕c1 ♕f4 16.d3 ♕×c1 17.♖f×c1 ♖b8 18.♖ab1 b6 19.♖b3 ♗b7 20.♗×b7 ♖×b7 21.a4 ♖fb8 22.♔f1 ♔f8 23.a5 ♔e7 24.a×b6 a×b6 25.♖a1 g5 26.♔e2 h5 27.h4 g×h4 28.♖h1 ♖g8 29.♔f3 ♖g4 30.♖hb1 ♖g5 31.♖×b6 ♖f5+ 32.♔e2 ♖×b6 33.♖×b6 ♖g5 34.♔f1 ♖f5 35.♖b1 ♔d6 36.♖e1 ♖f4 37.♖e3 ♖g4 38.♖h3 ♔e5 39.f3 ♖f4 40.♔e2 ♔f6 41.♖h1 ♔g5 42.♔f2 ♖f5 43.♖e1 ♔f4 44.♖e4+ ♔g5 45.♔e3 e5 46.♔e2 f6 47.♔e3 h3 48.g×h3 ♔g6 49.♔f2 ♔f7 50.♖e1 ♔e6 51.♖a1 ♔d6 52.♖a6+ ♔c7 53.♖a7+ ♔d6 54.♖f7 ♖f4 55.♖h7 ♖f5 56.♖h8 ♔d7 57.♖h7+ ♔d6 58.♖h6 ♔d7 59.♔e3 ♔d6 60.♖h8 ♔c6 61.♖c8+ ♔d6 62.♔f2 ♖f4 63.♔g3 ♖f5 64.h4 ♖f4 65.c3 ♖f5 66.♖d8+ ♔c6 (D)



After much maneuvering, it wasn't entirely clear how White could make progress here. But he sets a trap with his next move.

67.d4 e×d4?

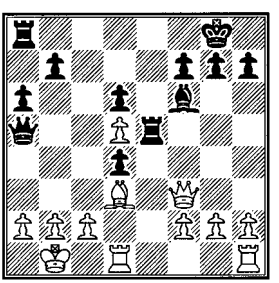
67...c×d4 was the right way to capture, when 68.c×d4 ♖f4! (68...e×d4? is still a blunder because of 69.♖×d4 with the threat of ♖f4) 69.d×e5 f×e5 70.♖d5 ♖f5 and Black holds on.

68.f4! 1-0

And Black resigned, as after 68...♔c7 69.♖a8 d×c3 70.♔f3 White will play ♔e4, winning Black's helpless rook!

(149) Radjabov – Shirov
Linares 2008
Sicilian Defense [B92]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e2 e5 7.♘b3 ♗e7 8.♗g5 ♗e6 9.♗×f6 ♗×f6 10.♕d3 ♘c6 11.0-0-0 ♘d4 12.♘×d4 e×d4 13.♘d5 ♗×d5 14.e×d5 0-0 15.♕f3 ♖e8 16.♗d3 ♖e5 17.♔b1 ♕a5 (D)



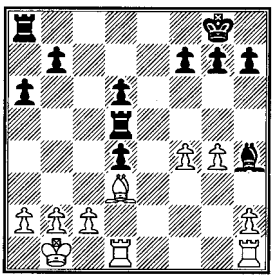
Now Black goes for the d5-pawn. So White has to react, otherwise it will be a simply drawish endgame after the exchanges on d5.

18.g4!

White prepares h4 with g5 to follow. I think that this exact position is quite playable for both sides. But White looks preferable – at least according to statistics!

18...♕×d5 19.♕×d5 ♖×d5 20.f4 ♗h4? (D)

20...g6? 21.b4! ♖c8 22.a4 ♖c3 23.♔a2+– as ♗e4 is to come, trapping the d5-rook. But Black had to go for 20...g5 when nothing is clear yet – the rook can escape...



21.b4!

Now the rook is trapped on d5!

21...♖c8 22.a4!

The most precise. Now it's impossible to save the rook on d5. 22.c4!? d×c3 23.♗×h7+ ♔×h7 24.♖×d5 c2+ 25.♔c1 ♗f2 and Black retains some drawing chances, while after 22.♗e4? d3! Black escapes!

22...♖c3

22...♗f6 23.♗e4! d3 24.c3!! ♖×c3 25.♗×d5 ♖a3 26.♗a2+– or 22...f5 23.g×f5+–.

23.♔b2

Another winning move was 23.♖c1!?: 23...f5 24.g×f5 g6 25.♖hg1! ♔f7 26.f×g6+ h×g6 27.♖g4! ♗e7 28.♖cg1 ♗f6 29.♖4g3 ♔f8 30.♖×g6 ♔f7 31.♖h6+–.

23...f5

There is no way out: 23...♖×d3 24.c×d3+– or 23...♗f6 24.♗e4 (24.g5+–) 24...d3 25.♗×d5 ♖c5+ 26.♔b3 ♖×d5 (26...♖c3+ 27.♔a2 ♖×c2+ 28.♔a3 ♖c3+ 29.♗b3+–) 27.♖×d3+–.

24.g×f5!

Accurate. Wrong would be 24.♗×f5? ♖×f5 25.g×f5 ♖c4! –+.

24...♖×d3 25.c×d3 ♖×f5 26.♖c1!

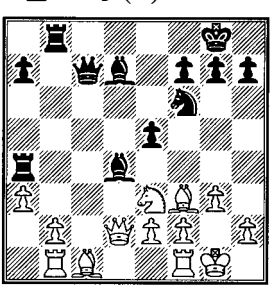
White won the exchange and he goes on to take the full point.

26...♖×f4 27.♖hf1 ♖×f1 28.♖×f1 ♗d8 29.a5! 1-0

An instructive and important game for the theory of the variation.

(150) Kramnik – Naiditsch
Dortmund 2010
Catalan Opening [E04]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.g3 d×c4 5.♗g2 c5 6.0-0 ♘c6 7.♕a4 ♗d7 8.♕×c4 c×d4 9.♘×d4 ♖c8 10.♘c3 ♘×d4 11.♕×d4 ♗c5 12.♕h4 0-0 13.♗×b7 ♖b8 14.♗f3 ♖b4 15.♕g5 ♗d4 16.♕d2 ♕c7 17.♘d1 ♖fb8 18.a3 ♖c4 19.♘e3 ♖a4 20.♖b1 e5 (D)



White is a pawn up, but Black has some pressure on the queenside in return.

21.b4!

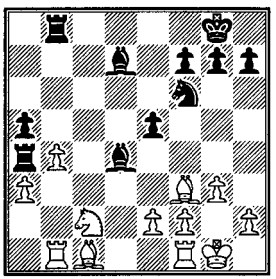
This seems like an "illogical" move, as Black can achieve sufficient

counterplay...

21...a5 22.♕c2!

An important move, which consolidates White's advantage.

22...♕×c2 23.♘×c2 (D)



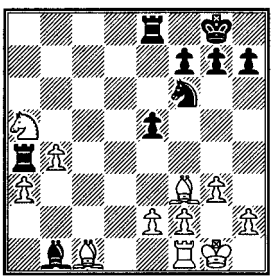
23...♗f5?!

23...♗c3! was worth trying, as converting White's extra pawn is not a trivial task: 24.♗b2 ♗×b2 25.♖×b2 a×b4 26.a×b4.

24.♘×d4! ♗×b1 25.♘c6!

Avoiding 25.♗c6? e×d4 26.♗×a4 a×b4 where after 27.♗f4?! (27.a×b4=) Black has 27...b×a3! 28.♗×b8 a2 and White is unable to stop the a2-pawn, but he can probably save himself with 29.♗c2 a1♕ 30.♖×b1 ♕a5∓.

25...♖e8 26.♘×a5 (D)



This is what White had dreamed about when he played his 21st move! Black is an exchange up but his rook is out of play and trapped. Perhaps, it would be correct to say that White is technically winning.

26...♗e4 27.♗b2 ♗×f3 28.e×f3 e4 29.f×e4 ♖×e4

After 29...♘×e4, 30.♖e1! is unpleasant for Black.

30.♖d1 h5 31.♖d8+ ♔h7 32.♔f1!

Now allowing any activity...

32...h4 33.f3! ♖e7

As sooner or later Black would be obliged to return the exchange, I think that this could be the most precise moment to do so: 33...♖e3 34.♔f2 ♖e×a3 35.♗×a3 h×g3+ 36.h×g3 ♖×a3 37.♘c6±.

34.g4

Now White controls even more sensitive squares than previously.

34...♖c7

Black could think of 34...♔g6!? 35.♘c6±.

35.♔e2! ♘d7

After 35...♖c2+, White has 36.♖d2.

36.♔d2 f6 37.f4 ♘c5 38.♖d4 ♔g6

After 38...♖×a5?! (or 38...♘e6 39.♖e4!±) 39.b×a5 ♘b3+ 40.♔d3 ♘×d4 41.♗×d4! it is hard to believe that Black can make it. Note that White should avoid 41.♔×d4 ♖c2!∞ with the idea of 42.♗c3? ♖×h2 43.a6 ♖e2−+.

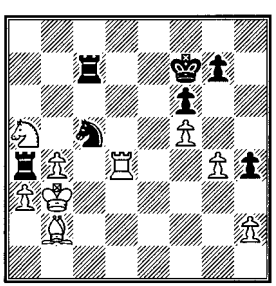
39.♔c3

The white king is getting close to the a4-rook.

39...♔f7 40.f5

Also good was 40.♖c4 as Black cannot go in for 40...♖×a5? (40...♘e4+±) 41.b×a5 ♘a4+ 42.♔b3 ♖×c4 43.♔×c4 ♘×b2+ 44.♔b5+−.

40...♘e4+ 41.♔b3 ♘c5+ (D)



42.♔a2! ♘a6

Not much better is 42...♘b7 43.♘c4 or 43.♘×b7 ♖×b7 44.♔b3 and White's queenside pawns should decide the game.

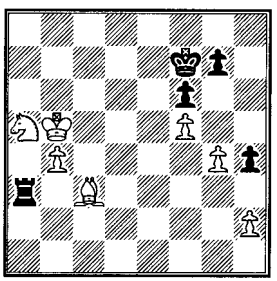
43.♖c4! ♖×c4

If 43...♘×b4+, then 44.♔b3!.

44.♘×c4 ♘c7 45.♘a5!

Black's rook is under arrest again.

45...♘a6 46.♔b3 ♘c5+ 47.♔c4 ♘e4 48.♔b5 ♘c3+ 49.♗×c3 ♖×a3 (D)



The rook is finally free, but the price Black paid for its liberation was too high.

50.♔c4 ♖a2 51.b5 1-0

Conclusion

A trapped rook is the start of a serious headache – avoid it at all cost and make yourself and your rook happy! Of course, neither one of the losers of the previous games wanted his rook trapped, but sometimes it is difficult to forecast the circumstance...

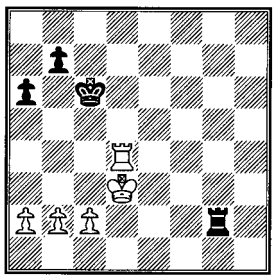
Losing a Drawn Rook Ending

Concept

Every decent chessplayer should know and handle simple endings well, especially rook endings which are quite commonly encountered in practice. Actually, as far as the simple versions of these endings are concerned, there is not much analysis available, as experts are mainly focused on complicated cases. In this chapter I will present three "accidents" that happened to two of my most promising trainees.

(151) Kamsky – Yilmaz
Baku 2009
Sicilian Defense [B81]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.h3 e6 7.g4 d5 8.♗g2 ♘×e4 9.♘×e4 d×e4 10.♗×e4 e5 11.♘b3 ♕×d1+ 12.♔×d1 h5 13.g5 ♘c6 14.♗e3 ♗e6 15.♔e2 0-0-0 16.h4 ♘d4+ 17.♘×d4 e×d4 18.♗f4 ♗d6 19.♗×d6 ♖×d6 20.♖he1 ♗d7 21.♔d2 ♖f8 22.♗d3 f6 23.f4 f×g5 24.f×g5 ♖f4 25.♖e4 ♖f2+ 26.♖e2 ♖f4 27.♖h2 ♖e6 28.♖f1 ♖×f1 29.♗×f1 ♖e4 30.♗e2 ♗g4 31.♖f2 ♗×e2 32.♖×e2 ♖×h4 33.♖e7 g6 34.♖g7 ♖g4 35.♖×g6 ♖g3 36.♖g7 h4 37.♖h7 h3 38.g6 ♖×g6 39.♖×h3 ♖g4 40.♖h7 ♖g5 41.♔d3 ♖g2 42.♖h4 ♔c7 43.♖×d4 ♔c6 (D)



Of course this is a theoretically drawn position, as White cannot really benefit from his extra pawn, since the material is limited and on one side of the board.

44.♖c4+

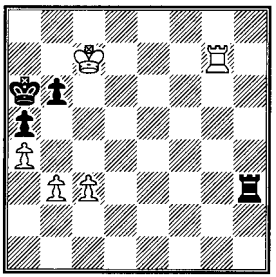
But of course White can try his chances without the slightest risk.

44...♔b5 45.b3 ♖h2 46.♖g4 a5

The waiting policy with ...♔c6-c7

was a fair option. But there certainly is nothing wrong with the moves played by Black.

47.♖g5+ ♔a6 48.a4 ♖h1 49.♖g6+ b6 50.♖g7 ♖h4 51.c3 ♖h3+ 52.♔d4 ♖h4+ 53.♔d5 ♖h5+ 54.♔d6 ♖h6+ 55.♔c7 ♖h3 (D)



It seems that White has not gained amything by his king's intervention, but this is not entirely true.

56.♖e7! ♔a7!

56...♖×c3+? would be too naive; after 57.♔b8, Black will be mated!

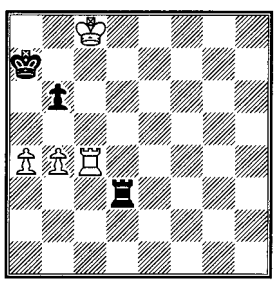
57.♔c6+ ♔a6 58.♔c7 ♔a7 59.♔c8+ ♔a8 60.♖c7 ♖d3

Not bad, but 60...♖h8+ 61.♔d7 ♔b8 was good enough and probably more accurate. The black rook must be able to deliver checks anytime.

61.♖c4 ♔a7

Exchanging pawns with 61...♖d5 62.b4 a×b4 (but not 62...b5? 63.♖c6 ♔a7 64.c4!+−) 63.c×b4 b5 is the natural policy for the defender.

62.b4 a×b4 63.c×b4 (D)



63...♔a6?

Black has lost his way and is now losing. He could still achieve a draw with the previously mentioned 63...♖h3 and if 64.♖c7+ then 64...♔a8.

64.♖c7! ♖h3

Too late. Not that 64...b5 65.♖c6+ ♔a7 66.a×b5 +− was of any help.

65.b5+ ♔a5 66.♖a7+ ♔b4 67.♔b7 ♖h6 68.♖a8

Now White will exchange his a-pawn for Black's b-pawn, achieving a theoretically won position, in view of the relative positions of the kings.

68...♖g6 69.♔a6! ♔×a4 70.♖b8 ♔b4 71.♖×b6 ♖g5 72.♖h6! ♔c5

72...♖×b5 73.♖h4+ ♔c5 74.♖h5+

73.♖c6+ 1-0

And Black resigned as White finally wins the ending: 73...♔d5 74.♖c1 and with the blacking cut off, the pawn promotes.

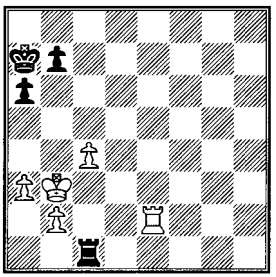
(152) Negi – Yilmaz

Czarna 2010

Sicilian Defense [B94]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗g5 ♘bd7 7.f4 ♕c7 8.♕f3 h6 9.♗×f6 ♘×f6 10.f5 e5 11.f×e6 f×e6 12.0-0-0 ♗d7 13.g3 0-0-0 14.♗h3 ♖e8 15.♖he1 ♘h7 16.♕e2 ♘g5 17.♗g4 g6 18.h4 h5 19.h×g5 h×g4 20.e5 d×e5 21.♘b3 ♗b4 22.♖d3 ♗c6 23.♕×g4 e4 24.♖de3 ♔b8 25.a3 ♗×c3 26.♖×c3 ♕e5 27.♔b1 ♕f5 28.♕d1 ♕d5 29.♕c1 ♖ef8 30.♘c5 e3 31.♕×e3 ♖h1 32.♘b3 ♖f3 33.♕c1 ♖×e1 34.♕×e1 ♖f5 35.♖d3 ♕h1 36.♕×h1 ♗×h1 37.♘d4 ♖f1+ 38.♔a2 e5 39.♘e6 ♗e4 40.♖d8+ ♔a7 41.c3 ♖g1 42.♘c5 ♗c6 43.♖d3 ♖e1 44.c4 e4 45.♖d6 e3 46.♖×g6 e2 47.♖e6 ♗f3

48.g6 ♖g1 49.♘d3 ♖×g3 50.♖e3 ♖×g6 51.♖×f3 ♖d6 52.♘e1 ♖d1 53.♘c2 ♖c1 54.♖e3 ♖×c2 55.♔b3 ♖c1 56.♖×e2 (D)



After a fierce fight a drawish rook endgame has appeared on the board. 3:2 pawns on one side without weaknesses is a hard nut to crack and clearly demands the generous help of the opponent.

56...a5

The correct follow-up, getting ready for further exchanges.

57.♖c2 ♖h1 58.♖d2 ♖c1 59.♖c2 ♖h1 60.c5 ♔a6 61.♔a4 ♖h4+

61...b6! is the quickest way to draw: 62.c6 (62.c×b6 ♖h4+ 63.♔b3 a4+ 64.♔c3 ♔×b6=) 62...♖h3! 63.♖c3 ♖×c3 64.b×c3 b5+ 65.♔b3 ♔b6=.

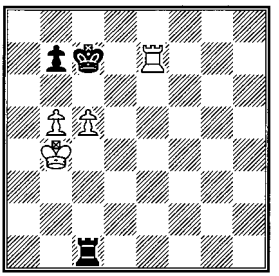
62.b4 a×b4 63.a×b4 ♖h3

Again 63...b6! with the principle idea of exchanging as many pawns as possible (without "weakening" the position of course) was good enough: 64.c6 b5+ 65.♔b3 ♖h3+ 66.♔b2 ♖h8 and the c-pawn falls.

64.b5+ ♔a7 65.♖e2 ♖h4+ 66.♔b3 ♖g4 67.♔c3 ♖h4 68.♖d2 ♔b8 69.♖d4 ♖h5 70.♔c4 ♔c7 71.♖f4 ♔d7 72.♖g4

72.♖f7+ ♔c8 73.♔b4 ♖g5 74.♔a5 ♖g6! leads nowhere.

72...♖h1 73.♔d5 ♖h5+ 74.♔d4 ♖h1 75.♖f4 ♖b1 76.♔c4 ♔c7 77.♖h4 ♔d7 78.♖h7+ ♔c8 79.♖h8+ ♔d7 80.♖h4 ♔c8 81.♖h3 ♔d7 82.♖b3 ♖h1 83.♔b4 ♔c7 84.♖e3 ♖c1 85.♖e7+ (D)



Although White has made no real progress (he really couldn't anyway) Black should be on the alert. Perhaps Black was feeling too relaxed and too confident of the draw...

85...♔c8?

85...♔b8! was correct and if 86.♔a5, then 86...♖×c5 87.♔b6 ♖c8=.

86.♔a5!

This is what Black overlooked.

86...♖×c5 87.♔b6 ♖c1 88.♖e8+

88.♖×b7 also wins.

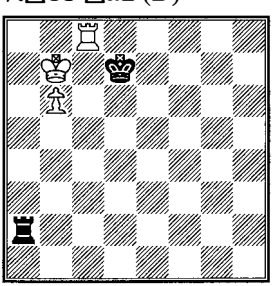
88...♔d7 89.♖b8 ♖b1 90.♖×b7+ ♔c8

90...♔d6 91.♖h7 ♖b2 92.♔a6+-

91.♖c7+ ♔b8 92.♖g7

Black is losing as his rook is placed on the wrong part of the board; it should be on the h-file in order to check the white king away from the third rank.

92...♔c8 93.♖g8+ ♔d7 94.♖b8! ♖a1 95.♔b7 ♖b1 96.b6 ♖a1 97.♖c8 ♖a2 (D)



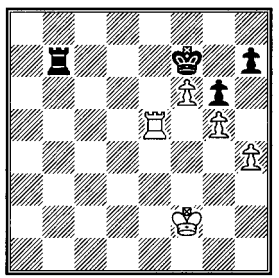
98.♖c3!

By using the usual "bridge" method, White cashes in the full point.

98...♖b2 99.♖d3+ ♔e7 100.♔c7 ♖c2+ 101.♔b8 ♖b2 102.b7 ♖a2 103.♖d4! ♖a1 104.♔c7 ♖c1+ 105.♔b6 ♖b1+ 106.♔c6 ♖b2 107.♖d5! 1-0 And the rook comes to b5 (the "bridge").

(153) Mamedov – Kamsky
Baku 2010
Sicilian Defense [B42]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 a6 5.♗d3 g6 6.0-0 ♗g7 7.♘b3 d6 8.a4 ♘e7 9.♘c3 ♘bc6 10.a5 d5 11.♗d2 0-0 12.♘a4 ♖b8 13.♗e3 ♗e5 14.♗b6 ♗c7 15.♕d2 ♗d7 16.f4 e5 17.f5 d×e4 18.f6 ♗×b6+ 19.♘×b6 ♘f5 20.♗×e4 ♗e6 21.♕×d8 ♖f×d8 22.♘c5 ♖d6 23.♖fd1 ♖×d1+ 24.♖×d1 ♘×a5 25.b4 ♘e3 26.♖d7 ♘ac4 27.♘×c4 ♗×c4 28.♗×b7 ♘×c2 29.♗×a6 ♗e6 30.♘×e6 f×e6 31.♗c4 ♘d4 32.b5 ♘×b5 33.♗×e6+ ♔h8 34.g4 ♘d4 35.♗d5 ♘e2+ 36.♔f2 ♘f4 37.h4 ♘×d5 38.♖×d5 ♔g8 39.♖×e5 ♔f7 40.g5 ♖b7 (D)

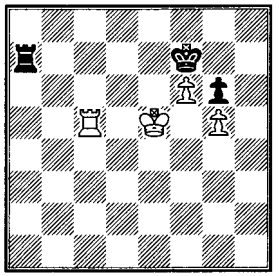


Here it is Kamsky who suffers and in the end loses this drawn ending!

41.♔f3 ♖a7 42.♔f4 ♖b7 43.♖e4 ♖a7

Black can draw by just maintaining the rook on the seventh rank and of course exchange the h-pawns.

44.♖c4 h6! 45.♖e4 h×g5+ 46.h×g5 ♔f8 47.♖d4 ♔f7 48.♔e5 ♖b7 49.♖d5 ♖a7 50.♖c5 (D)



50...♖d7?

To draw, Black should keep his rook on a7 and just play with his king: 50...♔f8 51.♔d5 ♔f7. When the white king approaches the queenside with 52.♔c6, planning ♖d5-d7, the rook should go after the g5-pawn via the g-file: 52...♖a1! 53.♖d5 ♖g1. He should also avoid an eventual ♖e5-e7+ exchange, as the pawn ending is lost.

51.♖c6?

Here White missed a winning continuation: 51.♖a5! ♖b7 52.♔d6 ♖b6+ 53.♔d5 ♖b7 54.♔c6 ♖b8 55.♖a7+ ♔f8 56.♖g7+-.

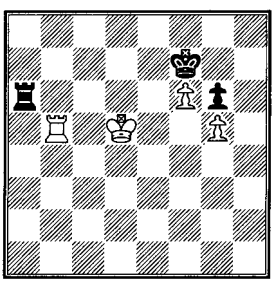
51...♖a7

Back to heaven again!

52.♔d6 ♖a5! 53.♖c7+ ♔f8 54.♖c5 ♖a6+ 55.♖c6 ♖a8

55...♖a5 56.♔e6 ♖a8 is also drawn.

56.♖c5 ♖a6+ 57.♔e5 ♖a7 58.♖b5 ♔f7 59.♔d6 ♖a6+ 60.♔d5 (D)



60...♖a8?

A fatal mistake. The well-known 60...Ra7 should draw.

61.♖b7+ ♔f8 62.♖g7 ♖a5+ 63.♔e6 ♖a6+

Black probably forgot about the mate after 63...♖×g5 64.♖a7.

64.♔e5 ♖a5+ 65.♔f4

Now Black loses a second pawn and the game as well.

65...♖a4+ 66.♔e3 ♖a3+ 67.♔d4 ♖a4+ 68.♔c3 ♖a3+ 69.♔b4 ♖h3 70.♖×g6 ♖h7 71.♖h6! 1-0

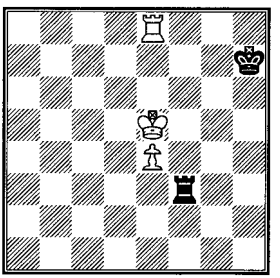
And Black resigned in view of 71...♖×h6 72.g×h6 ♔f7 73.h7.

(154) Sokolov – Banikas

Khanty Mansiysk 2010

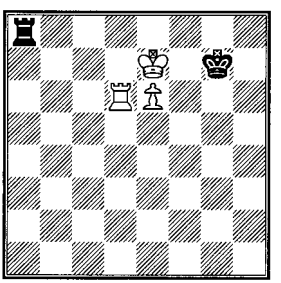
Queen's Indian Defense [E12]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.a3 ♗a6 5.♕c2 ♗b7 6.♘c3 c5 7.d×c5 ♗×c5 8.♗f4 0-0 9.♖d1 ♘h5 10.♗g5 ♗e7 11.♗c1 a6 12.g4 ♘f6 13.g5 ♘h5 14.♖g1 ♕c7 15.♖g4 b5 16.c×b5 a×b5 17.♕d3 b4 18.a×b4 d5 19.♘b5 ♕d8 20.♗d2 ♘c6 21.♕e3 d4 22.♘b×d4 ♘×b4 23.♗h3 ♕b6 24.♔f1 ♖fd8 25.♖c1 ♘d5 26.♕b3 ♕×b3 27.♘×b3 ♖a2 28.♘a5 ♖×b2 29.♘×b7 ♖×b7 30.♖d4 ♗a3 31.♖cc4 ♖bb8 32.♗g4 g6 33.♗×h5 g×h5 34.♖h4 ♘e7 35.♖×h5 ♘g6 36.♖h3 ♖b1+ 37.♔g2 ♗e7 38.♗e3 ♖b2 39.♘h4 ♘f8 40.♔f3 ♖d5 41.♖g3 ♖b3 42.♘g2 ♖×g5 43.♘f4 ♘g6 44.♘d3 ♖×g3+ 45.h×g3 ♖b8 46.♔g2 ♔g7 47.♖c6 ♗f6 48.f4 h5 49.♗f2 ♖d8 50.♖c7 ♖d5 51.♔f3 ♗d8 52.♖b7 ♗e7 53.♗e1 ♗f6 54.♗b4 ♔g8 55.♘f2 ♗d8 56.e4 ♖d4 57.♔e3 ♖c4 58.♖b8 ♔h7 59.♔d3 ♗c7 60.♖b5 ♖c1 61.♖×h5+ ♔g8 62.♖g5 ♖g1 63.♔e2 ♔h7 64.♔f3 ♖b1 65.♖h5+ ♔g8 66.♘d3 ♖d1 67.♔e2 ♖b1 68.♖c5 ♗×f4 69.g×f4 ♘×f4+ 70.♘×f4 ♖×b4 71.♔e3 ♖b3+ 72.♔d4 ♖f3 73.♘d3 f6 74.♖c8+ ♔h7 75.♖e8 e5+ 76.♘×e5 f×e5+ 77.♔×e5 (D)



This is a theoretical draw – the pawn is not too advanced, Black's king is close enough and his rook has the long side to operate on.

77...♔g7 78.♔e6 ♖f6+ 79.♔e7 ♖a6 80.♖d8 ♖a5 81.♖d5 ♖a7+ 82.♖d7 ♖a5 83.♔e6+ ♔g6 84.e5 ♖a6+ 85.♖d6 ♖a8 86.♔e7+ ♔g7 87.e6 (D)



87...♔g6!

This is one of the key positions in this kind of endgame. Black must be careful – he must not move his rook from the eighth rank or the a-file: 87...♖a1? 88.♔e8! ♖a8+ 89.♖d8 ♖a6 90.e7 ♖a7 91.♖c8 ♖a1 92.♖c2 or 87...♖b8 88.♖d8 ♖b7+ 89.♔d6 ♖b6+ 90.♔d7 ♖b7+ 91.♔c6.

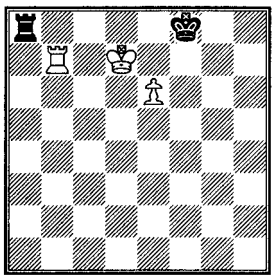
Therefore, as Black rook's best

square is on a8, he has only one other move.

88.♖d8 ♖a7+ 89.♖d7 ♖a8 90.♖b7 ♔g7 91.♖c7 ♔g6 92.♖c1 ♖a7+ 93.♔d6 ♖a6+ 94.♔d7 ♖a7+ 95.♖c7 ♖a8 96.♔e7 ♔g7 97.♔d7 ♔f8

97...♔f6 was also good enough.

98.♖b7 (D)



White can't make progress, as Black has defended accurately.

98...♖e8?

But here comes the blunder. 98...♔g7 was natural and guaranteed the half-point.

99.♖b1! 1-0

And Black resigned as he realized what he had done. His king will be forced from the important promotion square: 99...♖a8 100.e7+ ♔f7 101.♖f1+. This was Banikas' only defeat in the Olympiad!

Conclusion

We can never know why Black played as they did in the previous games; they knew of course what to do as we examined such positions, but time-trouble, pressure and chess blindness "helped" them not to score the draw! But thinking in chess terms we have to note that they "forgot" to keep their rook active and probably they were a bit too relaxed...

Technical Rook Endings

Concept

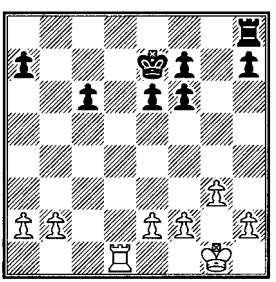
Rook endings always attract us as they are rich in possibilities, interesting maneuvers and plans. Technical rook endings should be a part of a chessplayer's education, as they consist of about 40% of all endings played. In my book *Practical Endgame Play – Mastering the Basics* (Everyman 2008) I analyzed a lot of these technical endings, while I created, in an ECO style, a schematic of most of the types of rook endings. We will start with two typical endings where the advantage of the one side is undisputable but of course there many things to come yet. Not all rook endings are drawn!

(155) Lein – Littlewood

Hastings 1980

Catalan Opening [E04]

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.d4 e6 3.g3 c5 4.♗g2 ♘c6 5.0-0 d5 6.c4 d×c4 7.♕a4 ♗d7 8.♕×c4 c×d4 9.♘×d4 ♖c8 10.♘c3 ♘×d4 11.♕×d4 ♗c5 12.♕h4 ♗c6 13.♖d1 ♕a5 14.♗g5 ♗e7 15.♗×c6+ ♖×c6 16.♘e4 ♕e5 17.♗×f6 ♗×f6 18.♘×f6+ ♕×f6 19.♕×f6 g×f6 20.♖ac1 ♔e7 21.♖×c6 b×c6 (D)



White's advantage is obvious and permanent. This is based of course on Black's shattered pawn structure (doubled and isolated pawns). All these

looks nice but the main question remains: how White will take advantage of them; what is his plan? He will start with some "microplans": applying pressure with his rook on both sides of the board, centralizing his king and then trying to create a passed pawn – simple, isn't it?

22.♖d4!

The start of the first microplan.

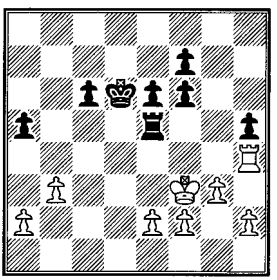
22...♖b8 23.b3 ♖b5

This is probably the best square for the black rook, as it can protect both its a- and h-pawns, by advancing them to the fifth rank. On the other hand, these pawns are getting "nearer" to the white king...

24.♖a4 a5 25.♔g2

The second microplan begins.

25...♖c5 26.♔f3 ♖e5 27.♖c4 ♔d6 28.♖h4 h5 (D)



29.g4!

And here comes the third microplan, the creation of a passed pawn. But Black is also getting rid of a serious weakness... However, this is modern chess; a continual exchange of advantages to realize more valuable objectives.

29...h×g4+ 30.♖×g4 ♔e7 31.h4 ♖d5 32.e3 f5 33.♖c4 ♖d2

Black is in trouble. Alternatives such as 33...♔d6 34.h5 f4 35.♖d4! (35.♖×f4 ♖×h5 36.♖×f7±) 35...♔e5 36.♖×d5+ e×d5 37.h6 ♔f6 38.♔×f4+–; 33...c5 34.♖a4+–; or finally, 33...♖d6 34.♖c5+–, points up the problems in his position.

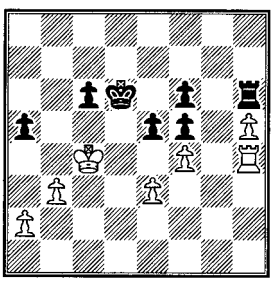
34.♖a4 ♖d5 35.♔e2

White now protects his second rank in order to give more freedom to his rook. Also his king is heading for the queenside.

35...♖b5 36.♖c4 ♔d6 37.♔d3 ♖b8 38.h5! ♖h8 39.♖h4 ♖h6

Now, as Black's rook is passive, the white king begins its important role.

40.♔c4 e5 41.f4 f6 (D)



42.b4!

As Black's weakness on a5 is not accessible any longer, White exchanges it and creates a second outside passed pawn!

42...a×b4

Or 42...a4 43.♖h3 ♔d7 44.♔c5 ♔c7 45.a3+–.

43.♔×b4 ♔d5 44.a4 c5+ 45.♔c3 ♔e4

Black tries to be active, as the passive retreat 45...♔c6 loses to 46.♔c4 ♔b6 47.♔d5 e×f4 48.e×f4 ♔a5 49.♔×c5 ♔×a4 50.♔d6.

46.f×e5+ ♔×e3

46...♔×e5 47.♔c4 ♔d6 48.a5 ♔c6 49.♖h1+–

47.e6!

A grave mistake would be 47.e×f6? ♖×f6 48.h6 ♖f8 49.h7 ♖h8 50.a5 f4 51.a6 f3 52.a7 f2 53.♖h1 ♔e2=.

47...f4 48.e7 ♖h8 49.♔c4 f3 50.♔×c5 f2 51.♖h1 ♔f3

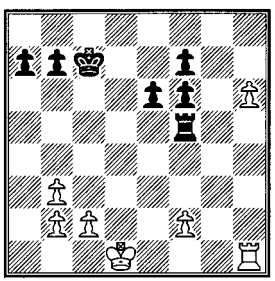
Black is lost anyway: 51...♖×h5+

52.♖×h5 f1♕ 53.e8♕+ +− or 51...♔e2 52.♔d6 f1♕ 53.♖×f1 ♔×f1 54.♔d7 +−.

52.♔d6 ♔g2 53.♖a1 f1♕ 54.♖×f1 ♔×f1 55.♔d7 f5 56.e8♕ ♖×e8 57.♔×e8 f4 58.h6 1-0

(156) Ponomariov – Papaioannou
Plovdiv 2003
Scandinavian Defense [B01]

1.e4 d5 2.e×d5 ♕×d5 3.♘c3 ♕a5 4.d4 c6 5.♗c4 ♗f5 6.♗d2 ♘f6 7.♘f3 e6 8.♘d5 ♕d8 9.♘×f6+ g×f6 10.♗b3 ♘d7 11.♕e2 ♕c7 12.♘h4 ♗g6 13.0-0-0 0-0-0 14.g3 ♔b8 15.♘g2 ♗d6 16.h4 h5 17.♘f4 ♗f5 18.♘×h5 c5 19.g4 ♖×h5 20.g×f5 ♖×f5 21.♗e3 c×d4 22.♗×d4 ♗c5 23.♗×c5 ♘×c5 24.♖×d8+ ♕×d8 25.h5 ♘×b3+ 26.a×b3 ♕d5 27.♕d1 ♔c7 28.h6 ♕×d1+ 29.♔×d1 (D)



White has already created a passed pawn and his rook is ideally placed behind it. Black cannot get any counterplay, as his pawn structure does not allow him to create his own passed pawn, so he is doomed to passivity and has to await White's plan. But how White can convert his advantage? He will have to create a second passed pawn on the other side of the board, as in the previous example. Note that the one f-pawn keeps the three black pawns on the kingside at bay!

29...♖d5+ 30.♔e2 ♖d8 31.b4

The queenside "plan" starts.

31...a6 32.c4 ♖h8 33.♔e3 ♖h7 34.♔f4

First White tests his chances on the kingside. He threatens ♔g4-h5 and ♖g1-g7, winning. No harm done, as Black has no counterplay.

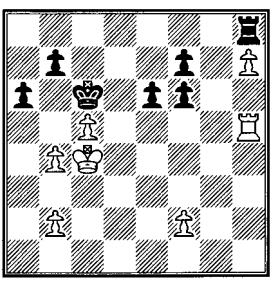
34...♖h8! 35.♖h3

35.♔g4 doesn't help: 35...♖g8+ 36.♔h5? (36.♔f4) 36...♖g5+! 37.♔h4 ♖g6=.

35...♖g8 36.h7 ♖h8 37.♔e4

After the harmless try, White refocuses on the correct path..

37...♔d6 38.♔d4 ♔c6 39.♖h6 ♖d8+ 40.♔c3 ♖h8 41.♖h5 ♔d6 42.c5+ ♔c6 43.♔c4 (D)



Black is in *zugzwang* and has to give ground to White.

43...b6

If 43...f5, then 44.♔d4 ♔d7 45.♖h6 ♔e7 46.♔c4+− or 43...♔d7 44.b5 a×b5+ 45.♔×b5 ♔c7 46.♖h6 f5 47.b4+−.

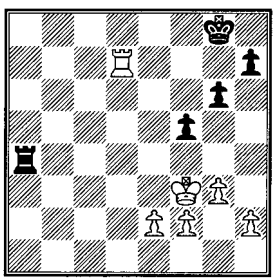
44.c×b6 ♔×b6 45.b5! 1-0

The game could wind up as follows: 45...a5 (45...a×b5+ 46.♖×b5+ ♔c6 47.♖h5 ♔b6 48.b4+−) 46.♔b3 f5 47.♔a4 ♔c5 48.f4 f6 (48...♔d4 49.b6 ♔e3 50.b7 ♔×f4 51.♖h4+ ♔g3 52.♖c4+−) 49.♖h6 e5 50.b6! (50.♖×f6 e×f4 51.♖×f5+ ♔b6 52.♖f6+ ♔b7 [52...♔c5 53.♔×a5+−] 53.♖×f4 ♖×h7 54.♔×a5 ♖g7=) 50...e×f4 51.b7 f3 52.♖×f6 ♔d5 53.♖×f5+ ♔c6 54.♖×f3+−.

Here is another technical ending:

(157) Grivas – Papadopoulos
Kallithea 2006
Queen's Indian Defense [E19]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.g3 ♗b7 5.♗g2 ♗e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♘c3 ♘e4 8.♕c2 ♘×c3 9.♕×c3 d6 10.b3 ♘d7 11.♗b2 f5 12.♕e3 ♔h8 13.♕×e6 ♗e4 14.c5 b×c5 15.d×c5 ♘×c5 16.♕c4 ♗f6 17.♗d4 ♗×d4 18.♘×d4 ♗×g2 19.♔×g2 a5 20.♕d5 ♕f6 21.♖ac1 ♕f7 22.♕×f7 ♖×f7 23.♖c2 ♔g8 24.♘c6 ♖a6 25.♘×a5 ♖×a5 26.b4 ♖b5 27.b×c5 ♖×c5 28.♖×c5 d×c5 29.♖c1 ♖e7 30.♔f3 ♖e5 31.♖d1 c4 32.♖c1 ♖a5 33.♖×c4 ♖×a2 34.♖×c7 ♖a4 35.♖c5 g6 36.♖c7 ♖b4 37.♖d7 ♖a4 (D)



If Black's f-pawn were on f7, then the draw would be simple and easy, with the ...h5 advance to come. Now, this position is full of poison for him, so he must be very careful. White must opt for the thematic g4- or e4-advance (depending on Black's reactions), under favorable circumstances. But there are also two important drawbacks in White's position: the active black rook and the presence of a pawn on g3, which is preventing the maneuver ♔g3, with f3 and e4 to follow.

38.e3

White would prefer not to push his e-pawn so early, as he needs room to maneuver around his king. But 38.h3 h5! 39.h4 ♔f8 40.♔e3 ♖e4+ 41.♔d3 ♖a4 42.f3 ♖a1 43.♔e3 ♖a4 44.♖d4 ♖a2 does not help. White's problem is the activity of the black rook. If this rook had been placed passively (let's say on a7) then White could proceed with ♔f4, f3 and e4, achieving a won position.

38...♖b4 39.h3 h5!

A somehow forced reaction. Black must exchange as many pawns as possible. Also, his king must be liberated from protecting of his "weak" h-pawn.

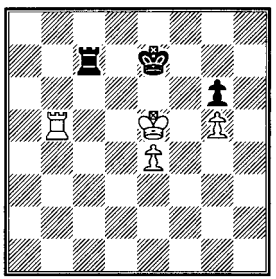
40.♖d4

White would feel happy if he could emerge with a passed e-pawn, but this cannot be achieved. After 40.h4 ♖b2! (40...♖b6? 41.♔f4 ♖a6 42.f3 ♖b6 43.e4 f×e4 44.f×e4+–) 41.♖d1 ♔f7 42.♖e1 ♔f6 43.♖e2 ♖b4 he cannot make any serious progress.

40...♖b2 41.g4 h×g4+ 42.h×g4 f×g4+

Here comes the fist serious question: what happens if Black just stays put? Well, after 42...♔f7 43.g5 (43.♔g3 ♖e2 44.♖d3 ♔f6 45.f3 ♔g5 46.g×f5 g×f5 47.♖a3 ♖×e3= is meaningless) 43...♔e6 44.♖a4 ♔f7 45.♔g3 ♖b7 (45...♖b3 46.♔f4) 46.♔f4 ♖c7 47.f3 ♖c5! (a forced continuation, avoiding the immediate penetration of the white king. After 47...♖b7? 48.♖a5 ♖b4+ 49.♔e5 ♖b3 50.♖a7+ ♔e8 51.♔f6 ♖×e3 52.♖a8+ ♔d7 53.♔×g6 ♖×f3 54.♔f7 White wins) 48.♖a7+ ♔g8 49.e4 (49.♖a6 ♔g7 50.♖f6 ♖c1 51.e4 f×e4 52.f×e4 ♖f1+ 53.♔e5 ♖g1 54.♔e6 ♖×g5 55.e5 ♖f5=) 49...f×e4 50.f×e4 ♔f8 51.♖d7 (51.e5 ♖c4+ 52.♔f3 ♖c1! [for more on this position see Hübner-Polgar, Dortmund 1996 – 52...♖c5? 53.♔e4 ♖b5 (53...♖c4+ 54.♔d5 ♖g4 55.e6+–) 54.♔d4 ♔g8 55.♖c7 ♖a5

56.♖c5 ♖a7 57.♔d5 ♖a1 58.♔d6+–] 53.♔e4 [53.♖a6 ♖e1 54.♔f4 ♔g7] 53...♖g1 54.♔d5 ♖×g5 55.♔d6 ♖g1 56.♖a8+ ♔g7 57.e6 ♖d1+ 58.♔e7 g5! [58...♖b1? 59.♔e8 g5 60.e7 +–] 59.♔e8 ♔f6 60.e7 ♖e1 61.♖a6+ ♔f5=; 51.♖a6 ♔g7 52.e5 ♖c1 53.♔e4 ♖g1 54.♔d5 ♖×g5 55.♔d6 ♖g1=) 51...♖a5 52.♖d5 ♖a7 53.♔e5 ♔e7 54.♖b5 ♖c7! (D)



(54...♔f7? 55.♔d6 ♖a6+ 56.♔d5 ♖a1 57.♖b7+ ♔f8 58.♖c7 ♖g1 59.♔e6+–)

White cannot make any progress: 55.♔d5 (or 55.♖b6 ♖c5+) 55...♖d7+.

43.♖×g4 ♔f7 44.♖a4 ♔f6 45.♔g3 ♖b3 46.♔f4 ♖b2 47.♖a6+ ♔f7 48.f3 ♖b3 49.e4

White would be happy if he could place his king on e5 with his pawns on e4 and f4, as then he will get winning chances. But this is only an illusion: 49.♖d6 g5+! 50.♔e4 ♖b1 51.♔f5 ♖g1! (51...♖f1? 52.♖f6+ ♔e7 53.♔×g5) 52.e4 ♖g3 53.♖f6+ ♔e7 54.♔e5 ♖h3 55.♖f5 ♖g3=.

49...♖c3 50.♖a7+ ♔e6 51.♔g4 ♖e3 52.♖a6+ ♔f7 53.♖b6

Nothing can be achieved with 53.♖a4, trying to achieve a position with f4 and ♔g5, as again Black's active rook is on the alert: 53...♖e1! 54.♖a3 (54.f4 ♖g1+ 55.♔f3 ♖f1+ 56.♔e3 ♔e7 [56...♖e1+? 57.♔d4 ♖f1 58.♔e5+–] 57.♖a6 ♔f7 58.♖c6 ♔g7 59.♖c7+ ♔f6 60.e5+ ♔e6 61.♖g7 ♖g1=) 54...♔f6 55.♔f4 g5+ 56.♔g3 ♖g1+ 57.♔f2 ♖b1 58.♖a6+ ♔f7=.

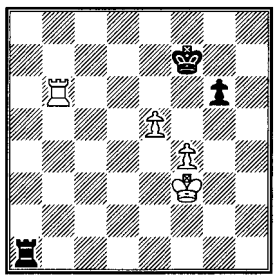
53...♖e1 54.♔g5 ♖g1+ 55.♔f4 ♖a1 56.♖d6

56.♖b3 ♔f6

56...♖a3 57.e5

If White is not able to penetrate Black's camp through the kingside, then he needs the e5-square for his king. If that is not possible, then at some point he will have to try the e5 advance.

57...♖a1 58.♖d7+ ♔e6 59.♖d6+ ♔f7 60.♖f6+ ♔g7 61.♖c6 ♔f7 62.♔g3 ♖a5 63.♔f4 ♖a1 64.♖b6 ♖a2 65.♔e3 ♖a4 66.f4 ♖a3+ 67.♔e4 ♖a4+ 68.♔f3 ♖a1! (D)

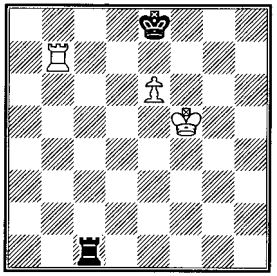


This is the right defense for Black, not allowing ♔g4-g5-h6. If the white king had already been on g4, then he would win with 69.♖b7+ ♔e6 70.♔g5.

69.♖f6+ ♔g7 70.♖d6 ♔f7 71.♖d7+ ♔f8 72.♖c7 ♖a2 73.♔e3 ♖a4 74.♖d7 ♖a3+ 75.♔e4 ♖a4+ 76.♖d4 ♖a5 77.♖d7 ♖a4+ 78.♔f3 ♖a1! 79.♖c7 ♖a2 80.♔g3 ♖a1 81.♖b7 ♖a2 82.♖d7 ♖a1 83.♔f3 ♖a2 84.f5

"Accepting" the draw, as White has already tried every possible idea. The end was easy:

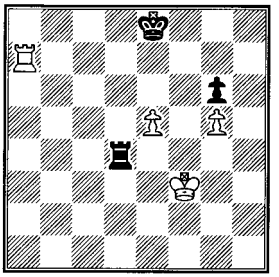
84...g×f5 85.♔f4 ♔e8 86.♖b7 ♖a6! 87.♔×f5 ♖c6 88.e6 ♖c1! (D) **½-½**



Black defended excellently, a model one for this kind of position. He kept his rook active and he did not fear any ghosts. White was unlucky in that his pawn structure did not help him.

(158) Hübner – J.Polgar
Dortmund 1996
Grünfeld Defense [D77]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.0-0 d5 6.c4 ♘c6 7.♘e5 d×c4 8.♘×c6 b×c6 9.♘c3 ♖b8 10.♗×c6 ♗b7 11.♗f3 ♗×f3 12.e×f3 ♘d5 13.♕e2 ♘b4 14.♕×c4 ♘c2 15.♖b1 ♖b4 16.♕d5 ♘×d4 17.♗e3 e6 18.♕×d8 ♖×d8 19.♔g2 ♖db8 20.♖fd1 h5 21.♘e4 ♘f5 22.♗×a7 ♖a8 23.♗c5 ♖×b2 24.♖×b2 ♗×b2 25.♖d2 ♗a3 26.♗×a3 ♖×a3 27.♖c2 c6 28.f4 ♔f8 29.♖×c6 ♖×a2 30.♖c8+ ♔g7 31.♖c7 ♔g8 32.♖d7 ♘e3+ 33.♔f3 ♘d5 34.♘g5 ♘f6 35.♖×f7 ♘g4 36.h3 ♖×f2+ 37.♔e4 ♘h6 38.♖a7 ♖e2+ 39.♔f3 ♖e1 40.♔f2 ♖b1 41.♘×e6 ♘f7 42.g4 h×g4 43.h×g4 ♖b6 44.♖e7 ♖b3 45.♔e2 ♖a3 46.g5 ♖b3 47.♖a7 ♖b6 48.♘c5 ♘d6 49.♔d3 ♖b1 50.♖a6 ♖d1+ 51.♔e2 ♖d4 52.♔f3 ♔f7 53.♖a7+ ♔e8 54.♘d7 ♘f7 55.♘f6+ ♔f8 56.♘d7+ ♔e8 57.♘e5 ♘×e5+ 58.f×e5 (D)

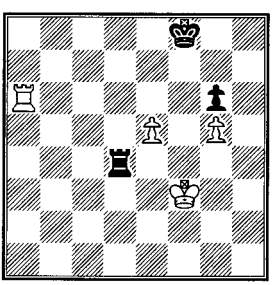


Here White can win, as Black has no time to cut off the white king along the f-file.

58...♔f8

Black tries to defend his pawn. If instead 58...♖b4, then 59.♖a6 (59.♖g7 ♖b6 60.♔e4 ♖a6 61.♖c7 ♔d8 62.♖c5 ♖a4+ 63.♔d5 ♖g4 64.♔d6 ♖×g5 65.♖a5 +− wins as well) 59...♔f7 (59...♖b5 60.♖×g6 [60.♔e4 ♖b4+ 61.♔d5 +−] 60...♖×e5 61.♔f4 ♖a5 62.♖f6+−) 60.♖f6+ ♔g7 61.e6 ♖b5 (61...♖a4 62.e7 ♖a8 63.♔e4 ♖e8 64.♖e6 ♔f7 65.♔d5 +−) 62.♔f4 ♖a5 (62...♖b4+ 63.♔e5 ♖b5+ 64.♔d6 ♖×g5 65.e7 [65.♖f7+ ♔g8 66.♖a7 ♖g1 67.♖a8+ ♔g7 68.e7 +−] 65...♔×f6 66.e8♕) 63.e7 ♖a8 64.♔e5 ♖a5+ 65.♔d6 ♖a6+ 66.♔c5 ♖a5+ 67.♔c6 ♖a8 68.♖f8! (the main motif in this ending) 68...♖×f8 69.e×f8♕+ ♔×f8 70.♔d6 +− and White wins the pawn ending.

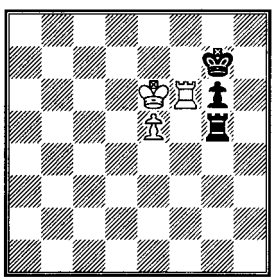
59.♖a6 (D)



59...♔f7?!

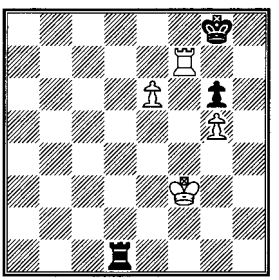
A more stubborn defense can be seen with 59...♔g7 although it should not be enough: 60.♖f6! (and not 60.e6? ♔f8 61.♖a7 ♖d6 [61...♖b4 62.♖f7+ ♔e8 63.♖f6 ♔e7 64.♖×g6 ♖a4 65.♔g3 (65.♖f6 ♖b4 66.♖f4 ♖×f4+ 67.♔×f4 ♔×e6 68.♔g4 ♔f7 69.♔h5 ♔g7=) 65...♖e4=] 62.e7+ [62.♖f7+ ♔e8 63.♖f6 ♔e7 64.♖×g6 ♖×e6 65.♖×e6+ ♔×e6=] 62...♔f7 63.♔e4 ♖e6+ [63...♖d1=] 64.♔d5 ♖e1 [64...♖×e7? 65.♖×e7+ ♔×e7 66.♔e5+−] 65.♔d6 ♖d1+=) 60...♖d1 61.♔e4 (61.♔f4? ♖e1 is a draw as the white king is cut off from the e-file and the d5-e6 route) 61...♖e1+ (61...♖g1 62.e6 ♖×g5 63.e7 ♔×f6 64.e8♕ +−.

It must be mentioned that this ending would be drawn if the black king were on g7 and the black rook on f5, but here Black just does not have the required time to "fix" his position) 62.♔d5 ♖g1 (62...♖d1+ 63.♔e6 ♖g1 64.♖f7+ ♔g8 65.♖a7 ♖×g5 66.♔f6 ♖g1 [66...♖f5+ 67.♔×g6+−] 67.e6 ♖f1+ 68.♔×g6 ♔f8 69.♖f7+ ♖×f7 70.e×f7+−) 63.♔e6 (or 63.♔d6 ♖×g5 64.♖f3 [64.♖f1 ♖g2=] 64...♖g1 65.e6 ♖d1+ 66.♔c6 ♖e1 67.♔d7 g5 68.e7 ♔g6 69.♖f1! +−) 63...♖×g5 (D)



And now the more advanced white pawn decides: 64.♖f7+ ♔g8 65.♖d7 ♖g1 66.♔d6 ♔f8 (66...♖d1+ 67.♔e7 ♖a1 68.e6 ♔g7 [68...g5 69.♖d5+−] 69.♔d6+ ♔f6 70.♖f7+ ♔g5 71.e7 ♖e1 72.♔d7 ♖d1+ 73.♔e8 ♔g4 74.♔f8 ♖e1 75.e8♕ ♖×e8+ 76.♔×e8 g5 77.♔e7+−) 67.♖d8+ ♔g7 68.e6 ♖d1+ 69.♔c7 ♖e1 70.♔d7 ♖d1+ 71.♔e8 ♖e1 72.♖d7+ ♔f6 (72...♔h6 73.e7 g5 74.♔f7 ♔h5 75.e8♕ ♖×e8 76.♔×e8 g4 77.♖g7+−) 73.♖f7+ ♔g5 (73...♔×e6 74.♖e7+ ♔f5 75.♖×e1 g5 76.♔f7+−) 74.e7 ♔h4 75.♖f6 g5 76.♔f7+−.

60.♖f6+ ♔g7 61.e6 ♖d1 62.♖f7+ ♔g8 (D)



63.♔e4!

Of course! White is now winning!

63...♖g1 64.♖f3 ♖e1+

Black could try one last trick with 64...♔g7 65.e7 ♖e1+ 66.♖e3 ♖×e3+ 67.♔×e3 ♔f7 68.♔e4 ♔e8 but White still wins: 69.♔d5! ♔d7 70.e8♕+! +−.

65.♔d5 ♔g7 66.♖f7+ ♔g8 67.♔d6 1-0

Conclusion

A chessplayer should not be that dogmatic when dealing with the concept of weaknesses. A weakness is identified when it can be attacked and eventually resulting in an advantage (material, better piece placement, etc.). Exchanging one advantage for another one is one of the cornerstones of modern chess and we should be aware of it.

The Isolani in the Endgame

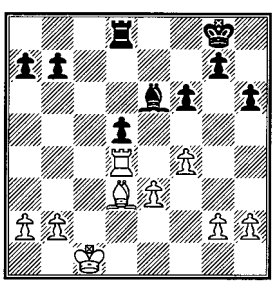
Concept

The isolated pawn with its pros and cons are quite familiar to any decent chessplayer; it is one of the subjects that trainers focus on quite early in the educational process. As it is well-known, an isolated pawn can be really very weak as the endgame is approaching. There it can be demonstrated to be very weak, a permanent headache, not only because it is vulnerable by its nature (it cannot be supported by any other pawn) but also because it disrupts the cooperation among its forces.

Of course, in most of the cases the "weaker" side can share the point by means of a difficult defense, but in general, as defending skills are not a human's being strong point – it fails to satisfy...

(159) Szabo – Penrose
Bath 1973
English Opening [A33]

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.d4 c×d4 5.♘×d4 e6 6.♘db5 ♗b4 7.♗f4 0-0 8.♗d6 ♗×d6 9.♘×d6 ♕b6 10.♕d2 ♘d4 11.♖d1 ♕×d6 12.♕×d4 ♕×d4 13.♖×d4 d5 14.c×d5 ♘×d5 15.♘×d5 e×d5 16.e3 ♗e6 17.♔d2 ♖fd8 18.♗d3 ♖ac8 19.f4 f6 20.♖c1 ♖×c1 21.♔×c1 h6 (D)



The diagrammed position is very instructive. White's plan is simple and consists of two phases. In the first phase, White will maximize the potential of his pieces, bringing his king to d4 and his bishop to f3. The second phase consists of the kingside breakthrough. Black can hardly react to this plan, as the absence of an adequate number of offensive and defensive pieces relegates him to passivity. This is a "textbook" example and constitutes complete proof of the value of "endgame theory." The continuation of the game fully justified White's play.

22.♔d2 ♔f8 23.♖a4

Creating some more weaknesses is always an enjoyable feature!

23...a6 24.♖b4 ♖d7 25.♔c3 ♔e7

25...d4+? 26.♖×d4 ♖×d4 27.e×d4± ♗×a2? 28.b3 loses a piece.

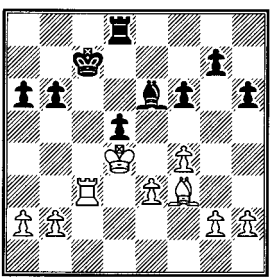
26.♔d4 ♔d8 27.♗e2!

The king has found its proper place; now it's the bishop's turn.

27...♔c7 28.♗f3 b6 29.♖b3

The rook will be needed in the kingside, so it has to return.

29...♖d8 30.♖c3+ (D)



30...♔b7?

This is easily the losing move. The king belongs in the center, either to keep the pressure on or just to defend. White would be better after 30...♔d6 31.h3 ♖b8 32.g4± but far from winning.

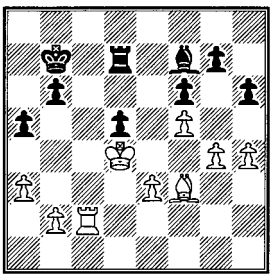
31.g4 ♖d6

If 31...g5, then 32.♖c2 ♗f7 33.h4! ♖d7 34.♖h2 and the white's rook penetration into Black's camp will be decisive.

32.a3 a5 33.h4 ♗f7 34.f5!

Creating a real target, the black g7-pawn!

34...♖d8 35.♖c2 ♖d7 (D)



35...g6 36.f×g6 ♗×g6 37.♖f2 ♔c6 38.♖f1 ♗f7 (38...♖d6 39.♖c1+ ♔d7 40.♗×d5) 39.♗g2 ♖d6 40.g5+− .

Completing the second phase.

36.g5 f×g5

The alternative is 36...h×g5 37.h×g5 ♗g8 38.g6! (Black's bishop now is just an observer) 38...♖d6 39.♗e2! ♖d8 40.♗b5 ♖d6 41.a4 ♖d8 (41...♔b8 42.♖c6) 42.♖c6+− .

37.h×g5 h×g5 38.♖g2 ♖d6

38...♔c6 39.♖×g5 ♗e8 (39...♗g8 40.f6) 40.a4+−

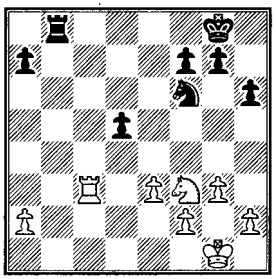
39.♖×g5 g6 40.f×g6 ♖×g6 1-0

Black resigned in view of 41.♗×d5+ ♔c7 42.♖×g6 ♗×g6 43.♔e5. Finally the "useless" isolani has fallen into White's hands!

A similar case can be seen in the next game. Black seemed as if he were holding the draw without much trouble, but the truth is that his passivity was not of a real help and very quickly he felt into a lost position.

(160) Nikolic – Portisch
Ter Apel 1994
Queen's Gambit Declined [D58]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗e7 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.♗g5 0-0 6.e3 h6 7.♗h4 b6 8.♗e2 ♗b7 9.♗×f6 ♗×f6 10.c×d5 e×d5 11.b4 c5 12.b×c5 b×c5 13.♖b1 ♗c6 14.0-0 ♘d7 15.♗b5 ♕c7 16.♕c2 ♖fc8 17.♖fc1 ♖ab8 18.d×c5 ♗×c3 19.♗×c6 ♕×c6 20.♖×b8 ♖×b8 21.♕×c3 ♕×c5 22.g3 ♕×c3 23.♖×c3 ♘f6 (D)



Here White stands slightly better because of his superior pawn structure. But Black can defend.

24.♖c2!

An important prophylactic move, as the a2- and f2-pawns need protection. And White does not allow any counterplay by placing his rook on his seventh rank. Later he will improve his king and knight.

24...♘e4 25.♘e5

In such endings the outpost in front of the isolated pawn is not that important; the most important element is to attack it!

25...♖b7 26.♔f1

The king, as usual in the endgame, takes its position...

26...♔f8 27.♔e2 ♔e7 28.g4!

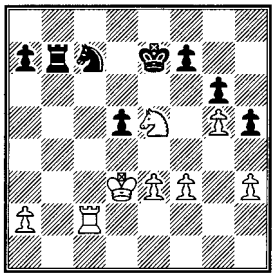
A typical move which gains space on the kingside. Of course the position is still equal, but White at least is planning and executing, posing problems for Black.

28...♘f6 29.h3 g6 30.f3 h5?!

As the defender should, Black tries

to exchange pawns. But here Black should stay put with 30...♔d6=.

31.g5 ♘e8 32.♔d3 ♘c7 (D)



33.♖c5!

Now Black is in trouble, as White threatens ♖a5 and ♘c6 or ♖c6-f6 among others.

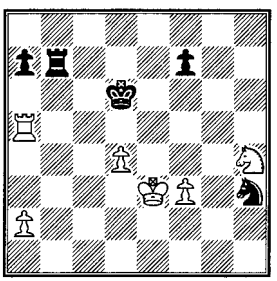
33...d4

Black has to sacrifice a pawn, since 33...♔d6? 34.♖c6+ ♔e7 (34...♔×e5? 35.f4+ ♔f5 36.♖f6#) 35.♖f6+– is hopeless and 33...♔e8 leads to a difficult position after 34.f4 ♔e7 35.h4 ♔e8 36.♖c6±.

34.e×d4 ♘e6 35.♖a5 ♘×g5 36.♘×g6+ ♔f6

Or 36...f×g6 37.♖×g5 ♖b6 38.♖a5 a6 39.f4±.

37.♘f4 h4 38.♘h5+ ♔g6 39.♘f4+ ♔f6 40.♖a6+ ♔f5 41.♘g2 ♘×h3 42.♖a5+ ♔e6 43.♔e3 ♔d6 44.♘×h4 (D)



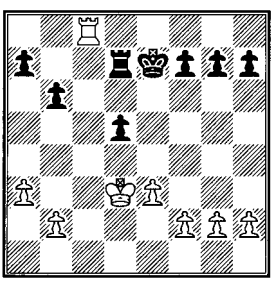
And White went on to win the ending, as he is a healthy pawn up.

44...♖e7+ 45.♔d2 ♔c6 46.♘f5 ♖d7 47.♔e3 ♔b6 48.♖e5 ♘g5 49.a4 ♘e6 50.♔d3 ♘d8 51.♖b5+ ♔c7 52.♖c5+ ♔b6 53.♘e3 ♘e6 54.♖b5+ ♔c7 55.d5 ♘g5 56.f4 ♘h3 57.f5 ♖e7 58.♘c4 ♘f2+ 59.♔c3 ♖e1 60.♖a5 ♔b8 61.d6 ♖c1+ 62.♔b3 f6 63.♘d2 ♖c8 64.♖b5+ ♔a8 65.♖b4 ♘d3 66.♖c4 ♖d8 67.♘e4 ♔b8 68.♖d4 ♘e5 69.♘×f6 ♖f8 70.♘e4 ♘d7 71.♖d5 ♖e8 72.♘c5 ♖e3+ 73.♔b4 ♔c8 74.♘×d7 ♔×d7 75.♔b5 ♖h3 76.♔a6 1-0

Simple rook endings are easier to hold:

(161) Bareev – Farago
Rome 1990
Nimzo-Indian [E32]

1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 0-0 5.a3 ♗×c3+ 6.♕×c3 b6 7.♗g5 ♗a6 8.e3 d5 9.♘f3 ♘bd7 10.c×d5 ♗×f1 11.♖×f1 e×d5 12.♘e5 ♘×e5 13.d×e5 ♘e4 14.♗×d8 ♘×c3 15.♗×c7 ♘b5 16.♗d6 ♘×d6 17.e×d6 ♖fd8 18.♔e2 ♖×d6 19.♖fd1 ♖ad8 20.♖ac1 ♔f8 21.♖c7 ♖6d7 22.♖dc1 ♔e7 23.♔d3 ♖×c7 24.♖×c7+ ♖d7 25.♖c8 (D)



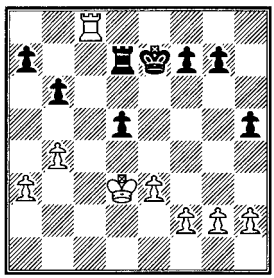
White retains some winning chances, as his king and rook are more active than their counterparts. But Black can defend.

25...h5?!

An inaccuracy. He had to go in for 25...a5!, taking measures on the

queenside, although after 26.g4! White still maintains an advantage.

26.b4! (D)

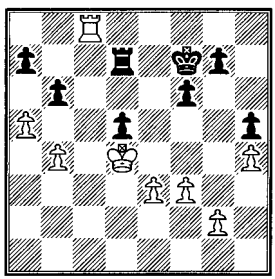


Now White can create a strong outpost on b7 by advancing his queenside pawns.

26...♔e6 27.♔d4 f6 28.h4 ♔f5 29.f3 ♔g6

29...g5 doesn't help: 30.h×g5 f×g5 31.♖f8+ ♔g6 32.♖e8±, so Black has to remain passive.

30.a4! ♔f7 31.a5 (D)



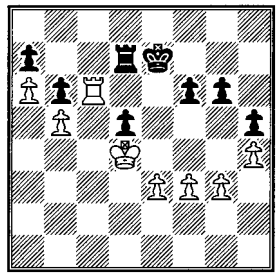
31...♔e6?!

The defender must exchange pawns, so Black should have tried 31...b×a5 32.b×a5 ♔e6 as then he could have some counterplay against the white a-pawn. White would still better, however, after 33.♖e8+ ♔f7 34.♖b8 ♔e6 35.♖c8 (35.a6 ♖d6) 35...♖d6 36.♖e8+ ♔f7 37.♖b8 ♔e6 38.♖b7 ♖a6 39.♖b5 ♖d6 40.♖c5±, but perhaps Black can defend.

32.a6! ♔d6 33.b5 ♔e6 34.g3 g6 35.♖e8+ ♔d6

If 35...♔f7 then 36.♖b8 and 37.♖b7.

36.♖f8 ♔e6 37.♖c8 ♔d6 38.♖c6+ ♔e7 (D)



39.g4!

The combinative initiative on all sides of the board should guarantee White the win. Now Black has to chose between a passed pawn for White (after 39...h×g4 40.f×g4 and 41.h5 or an extra weak pawn on h5, as in the game.

39...♔f7 40.g×h5 g×h5 41.♖c8

Now it will be too difficult for Black to hold with three weaknesses, a7, d5 and h5.

41...♔e6 42.♖e8+! ♔d6

42...♔f7 43.♖b8 and 44.♖b7.

43.♖h8 ♖c7 44.♖d8+ ♔e6 45.♖×d5

White won a healthy pawn and soon the game:

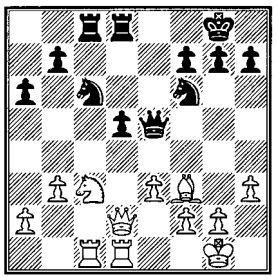
45...f5 46.e4 f×e4 47.f×e4 ♖h7 48.♖d8 ♖c7 49.♖e8+ ♔f6 50.e5+ ♔f7 51.♖h8 ♖c5 52.♖×h5 ♔e6 53.♖h6+ ♔e7 54.♔e4 ♖×b5 55.♔f5 1-0

The main question remains – particularly troubling for weaker players – how will the extra pawn be converted to a full point after the pawn is won? The following game helps answer this question:

(162) Ribli – Adorjan
Budapest 1979
Queen's Gambit Declined [D32]

1.c4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e6 4.e3 ♘c6 5.d4 d5 6.c×d5 e×d5

7.♗b5 ♗d6 8.d×c5 ♗×c5 9.0-0 0-0 10.b3 ♗g4 11.♗b2 ♖c8 12.♖c1 ♕d6 13.♗e2 a6 14.h3 ♗×f3 15.♗×f3 ♖fd8 16.♕c2 ♗a3 17.♖fd1 ♗×b2 18.♕×b2 ♕e5 19.♕d2 (D)



In this game White wins the isolated pawn quite early, as Black could not defend it.

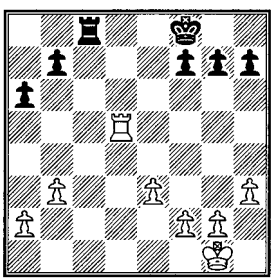
19...♘e7

19...♘e4? loses to 20.♘×e4 d×e4 21.♖×c6 and 19...d4 20.♗×c6 ♖×c6 21.e×d4 leads to the same result.

20.♘×d5!

A small combination which wins the isolated pawn.

20...♘e×d5 21.♖×c8 ♖×c8 22.♗×d5 ♘×d5 23.♕×d5 ♕×d5 24.♖×d5 ♔f8 (D)



So White is a solid pawn up but he has no other advantages. White's winning process will require time, care and patience. The correct plan should consist of the following four parts:

1. Protect White's queenside from Black's rook.

2. Force Black to create weaknesses in his kingside pawn formation.

3. By a judicious advance of White's kingside pawns, expose and take advantage of Black's positional weaknesses.

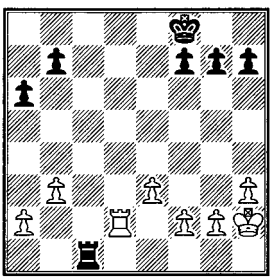
4. With Black occupied on the kingside, make a decisive penetration on the queenside.

The course of the game will show various critical aspects of this plan.

25.♖d2!

Protecting the queenside and denying the black's rook access to the second rank. Dubious would be 25.♖d7? ♖c1+ 26.♔h2 ♖c2 27.a4 b5 28.♔g3 ♖b2 29.♖d3 ♔e7 and Black's activity should assure a draw.

25...♖c1+ 26.♔h2 (D)



26...h5?!

Voluntary weakening the kingside is wrong, since this just helps White. He should stay put with 26...♔e7.

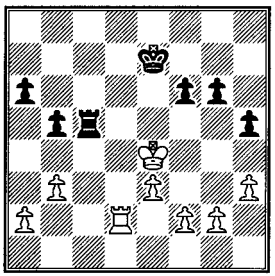
27.♔g3 ♔e7 28.♔f4?!

Losing time. it would be more to the point to continue with 28.♔h4! g6 29.♔g5 and 30.♔h6, when White's active king would make things easier.

28...b5 29.♔e5 f6+ 30.♔f5 ♖c5+ 31.♔e4 g6 (D)

32.♔d3!

Since White's king cannot penetrate on the kingside, it tries the other wing. It is too early to advance pawns, as White should create some weaknesses first.



32...♖c1 33.♖c2 ♖d1+ 34.♔c3 a5

Forced, as otherwise White would penetrate with ♔b4. Yet, now Black's queenside pawns are more vulnerable to a potential attack.

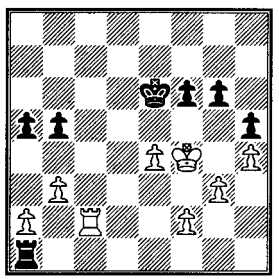
35.♖d2 ♖c1+ 36.♔b2 ♖g1! 37.g3 ♔e6 38.♔c3 ♔e5 39.♔d3 ♖h1 40.♖c2 ♔d5!

Black cannot allow 41.♖c5+.

41.e4+ ♔d6 42.h4 ♖e1 43.♔d4 ♖d1+ 44.♔e3 ♖a1!

Black correctly keeps the white pawns under attack. In this way he does not allow the white pieces to become active.

45.♔f4 ♔e6 (D)



46.f3!

Since there is no reason to believe that Black's pawns can become further vulnerable, part 2 can be considered to be completed. Therefore it is time to start part 3.

46...♔d6 47.♖g2!

Prophylaxis! It would be too early for 47.e5+? f×e5+ 48.♔g5, because Black gets sufficient counterplay: 48...♖g1! 49.g4 e4!.

47...♔e6 48.♖d2!

With his rook's maneuvers, White has put Black very close to *zugzwang*. If Black's rook moves, then decisive is 49.♖d5 and if Black's king moves, then decisive is 49.e5.

48...b4!

Best. After 48...a4 49.b×a4 b×a4 White can put Black into *zugzwang*: 50.♖c2! ♔d6

51.♖b2! ♔e6 52.♖d2 a3 53.♖e2! ♔d6 54.♖c2! ♔e6 55.♖d2!. Now a king move loses to 56.e5! and a rook move loses to 56.♖d3!.

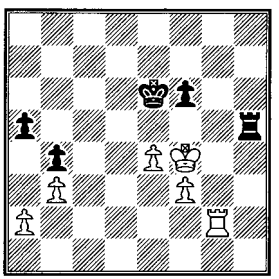
49.♖c2 ♔d6 50.♖g2 ♖d1!

Black must prevent the thematic *zugzwang* position arising after 50...♔e6 51.♖d2. But now White can carry out his kingside advance.

51.g4!

Again 51.e5+? would be wrong: 51...f×e5+ 52.♔g5 ♖f1! 53.♔×g6 ♖×f3 and Black's passed pawn will provide sufficient counterplay.

51...♖h1! 52.g×h5 ♖×h4+ 53.♖g4 ♖×h5 54.♖×g6 ♔e6 55.♖g2! (D)



Again protecting the second rank, while getting the rook into position to swing it to the fifth or eighth rank. The exchange of the kingside pawns has yielded the following benefits to White:

1. The f5-square for his king.

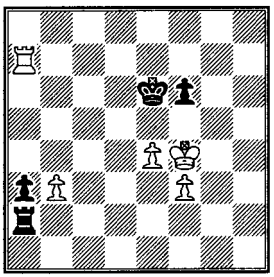
2. The fifth rank is now much more accessible to White's rook for attack-

ing the black a-pawn.

White will try to set up a position where both of these factors will come into play.

55...♖h4+?!

This loses because White will be able to put Black into *zugzwang*. Andras Adorjan published a lengthy analysis to demonstrate that Black can draw after 55...♖c5!. His main line is 56.♖d2 a4! 57.♖d4 a3! 58.♖×b4 ♖c2 59.♖b6+ ♔e7 60.♔f5 ♖c5+ 61.♔g4 ♖g5+ 62.♔f4 (62.♔h3 ♖h5+ 63.♔g2 ♖c5!) 62...♖g2 63.♖a6 ♖×a2 64.♔f5 ♖f2 65.f4 a2 66.b4 ♔d7! 67.b5 ♔c7! 68.e5 f×e5 69.♔×e5 ♖e2+. In this position, Black's king can hold the b-pawn, while the rook can hold the f-pawn, and thus it is a draw. But the analysis in not entirely correct, as White can play 59.♖a4! ♖×a2 60.♖a7! (D)

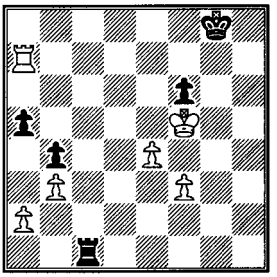


...when Black again is in *zugzwang*: 60...♖a1 (60...♔d6 61.b4 ♔e6 62.♖a6+ ♔e7 63.♔f5 ♖b2 64.♖×a3 ♖×b4 65.♖a7+-) 61.♖a6+ ♔e7 62.♔f5 ♖a2 63.f4+-.

56.♔e3 ♖h1 57.♖c2! ♖e1+ 58.♔f4 ♖a1 59.♖h2!

Putting Black into *zugzwang* again. If Black's rook moves, White wins with 60.♖h5.

59...♔f7 60.♔f5! ♖c1 61.♖h7+ ♔g8 62.♖a7! 1-0 (D)



Black resigns, as White wins another pawn while retaining a significant advantage. A very instructive game.

Conclusion

Those saddled with isolated pawns should try to avoid playing endgames, as they will face extreme problems. If there is no other way, they just should defend "like a machine," trying to be active whether or not the pawn can be held. Pure rook endings are easier to handle.

Knight and Three Pawns vs. Rook

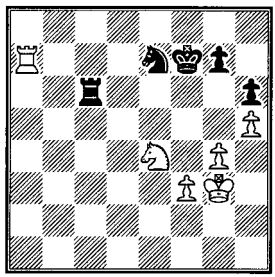
Concept

In this survey we will examine a case that it is considered to be easy; a knight and three connected pawns on one side of the board versus a rook. Most chessplayers would feel that this is a piece of cake, but trouble always exists:

(163) Eljanov – Haznedaroglu
Novi Sad 2009
Semi-Slav Defense [D46]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.e3 e6 5.♘f3 ♘bd7 6.♗d3 ♗d6 7.0-0 0-0 8.e4 d×c4 9.♗×c4 e5 10.♗e3 ♕e7 11.h3 b5 12.♗b3 a6 13.a3 c5 14.♘d5 ♘×d5 15.♗×d5 ♖a7 16.♗g5 ♕e8 17.d×c5 ♗×c5 18.b4 ♗e7 19.♗e3 ♖c7 20.♖c1

♖×c1 21.♕×c1 ♘f6 22.♗c5 ♗×c5 23.♕×c5 ♗e6 24.♗c6 ♗d7 25.♗×d7 ♘×d7 26.♕c6 ♕c8 27.♖c1 ♕×c6 28.♖×c6 ♖a8 29.♖c7 ♘f6 30.♘×e5 ♘×e4 31.♘×f7 ♖f8 32.f3 ♘d2 33.♘d6 ♘b1 34.♖a7 ♘×a3 35.♖×a6 ♘c2 36.♘×b5 ♘×b4 37.♖d6 h6 38.♘c3 ♖c8 39.♘e4 ♘c6 40.h4 ♘e7 41.h5 ♖a8 42.♔h2 ♘f5 43.♖d3 ♖a2 44.♔h3 ♔f7 45.g4 ♘e7 46.♖d7 ♖c2 47.♔g3 ♖c6 48.♖a7 (D)



White is a pawn-up but the reduced material helps the weaker side considerably. Still there is much work to be done to save the half-point.

48...♖c1?

48...♖b6 or 48...♔f8 was correct. Now White's task is easier.

49.♘d6+ ♔e6 50.♘e8! ♖c8

After 50...g6 51.h×g6 ♘×g6 White wins the h-pawn: 52.♖a6+ ♔f7 53.♘d6+.

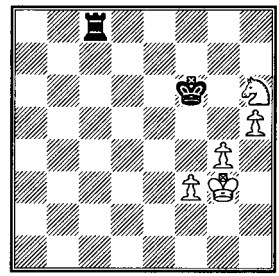
51.♘×g7+

51.♖a6+ ♔d7 52.♘×g7 was even simpler.

51...♔f6 52.♖×e7?

This looks good enough, but still 52.f4 ♘d5 (52...♖c3+ 53.♔h4 ♖c4 54.♘e8+-) 53.♘f5 ♖c3+ 54.♔h4 ♘×f4 55.♖a6+ ♔e5 56.♘×h6+- was the objectively better continuation.

52...♔×e7 53.♘f5+ ♔f6 54.♘×h6 (D)



Three connected pawns and a knight versus a lonely rook usually is a mismatch. But sometimes even this is not enough!

54...♖c1?

Black must try to stop the advance of the pawns and for this he has to block the h-pawn with his king. He should have played 54...♖c3! 55.♘f5 ♖a3 56.♘d6 ♔g5! 57.♘e4+ ♔h6 58.♔g2 ♖a2+ 59.♔h3 ♖a3 and it is not clear how White would proceed.

55.♘f5 ♖a1

Now 55...♖c3 56.♘d6 ♔g5? fails to 57.♘e4+.

56.f4 ♖g1+ 57.♔f3 ♖e1

Or 57...♖f1+ 58.♔e4 ♖e1+ 59.♘e3 and the pawns will advance further.

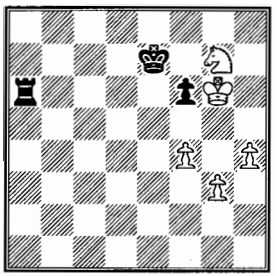
58.♘g3 1-0

Even more spectacular is the next game, where an absolutely elite player couldn't finish the job:

(164) Aronian – Topalov
Morelia 2006
Nimzo-Indian Defense [E55]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.e3 0-0 5.♗d3 c5 6.♘f3 d5 7.0-0 d×c4 8.♗×c4 ♘bd7 9.a3 c×d4 10.a×b4 d×c3 11.b×c3 ♕c7 12.♗e2 ♘d5 13.♗d3 ♕×c3 14.♖a3 ♕f6 15.♕c2 h6 16.b5 ♘b4 17.♗h7+ ♔h8 18.♕b1 a5

19.♗e4 ♘c5 20.♗d2 ♗d7 21.♗×b4 a×b4 22.♕×b4 ♖×a3 23.♕×c5 ♖fa8 24.♘e5 b6 25.♕c7 ♗×b5 26.♗×a8 ♖×a8 27.♖d1 ♗a4 28.♖d4 ♗e8 29.g3 ♔h7 30.♔g2 ♖a5 31.♘c4 ♖a2 32.♖f4 ♕c3 33.♕×b6 ♖a1 34.♕b7 ♕c1 35.♔h3 f6 36.♖g4 ♗g6 37.♖×g6 ♔×g6 38.♕e4+ ♔f7 39.♘d6+ ♔e7 40.♘f5+ ♔d7 41.♘×g7 ♕f1+ 42.♔h4 ♕×f2 43.♕×e6+ ♔c7 44.♕c4+ ♔b7 45.♕e4+ ♔b8 46.♕f4+ ♕×f4+ 47.e×f4 ♖a2 48.h3 ♔c8 49.♔h5 ♖a3 50.♘f5 ♔d7 51.♔×h6 ♔e6 52.♔g6 ♖a5 53.♘g7+ ♔e7 54.h4 ♖a6 55.♘h5 ♖a8 56.♘g7 ♖a6 (D)



White has repeated the position once, and now he makes a mistake that is not obvious, but is serious:

57.g4?

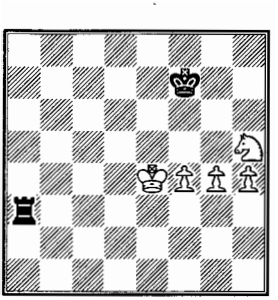
According to grandmaster Marin's analyses, victory could have been achieved by 57.♘f5+! ♔f8 58.g4! (after 58.h5? ♔g8 White, possibly, cannot win!) and then, for example, 58...♖a4 59.♘g7! and so on.

57...f5+!! 58.♔×f5 ♔f7 59.♘h5

There were no other available squares for the knight.

59...♖a5+ 60.♔e4 ♖a3!! (D)

Now Black regains one of the pawns, reaching, according to a ChessBase report, a theoretically drawn endgame. Well, who can argue with the



Nalimov Tablebases?! So, the rest of the game can be left without notes.

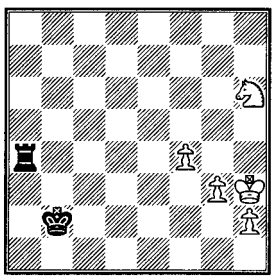
61.g5 ♖h3 62.♔f5 ♖×h4 63.g6+ ♔g8 64.♔g5 ♖h1 65.♘f6+ ♔f8 66.♘h5 ♖g1+ 67.♔h6 ♖h1 68.f5 ♔g8 69.♔g5 ♖g1+ 70.♔f6 ♖g4 71.♘g7 ♖a4 72.♘e6 ♖a5 73.♘c7 ♔f8 74.♔e6 ♖a7 75.♘b5 ♖e7+ 76.♔f6 ♖d7 77.♘c3 ♖d6+ 78.♔g5 ♔g7 79.♘b5 ♖d5 80.♘c7 ♖e5 81.♘e6+ ♔g8 82.♔f6 ♖a5 83.♘c7 ♖c5 84.♘e8 ♖c1 85.♘d6 ♔f8 86.♘e4 ♖c6+ 87.♔g5 ♖c4 88.♘g3 ♖c3 89.♘e4 ♖c4 90.♘f6 ♖c1 91.♘d7+ ♔g8 92.f6 ♖f1 93.♘e5 ♖g1+ 94.♔f5 ♖f1+ 95.♔e6 ♖e1 96.♔d6 ♖e2 97.♘c6 ♖g2 98.♔e6 ♖e2+ 99.♔d7 ♔f8 100.♔d6 ♖g2 101.♘e5 ♖d2+ 102.♔e6 ♖e2 103.♔f5 ♖f2+ 104.♔g5 ♖g2+ 105.♔h4 ♖f2 106.♘g4 ♖g2 107.♘e5 ♖f2 108.♔g5 ♖g2+ 109.♔f4 ♖f2+ 110.♘f3 ♖f1 111.♔e3 ♔g8 112.♔f4 ♔f8 113.♔e4 ♔g8 114.♔e3 ♖a1 115.♔f4 ♖f1 116.♔g4 ♖f2 117.♔g3 ♖f1 118.♔f4 ♖f2 119.♔e4 ♖f1 120.♔e3 ♖a1 121.♔d4 ♖f1 122.♔e4 ♖f2 123.g7 ♖g2 ½-½

And what about top-rated Magnus Carlsen? Even if this was a blitz game, it shouldn't create too many problems for the youngster. But the experienced

Ivanchuk created maximum problems for him and he was rewarded!

(165) Carlsen – Ivanchuk
Moscow 2007
Nimzo-Indian Defense [E39]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 c5 5.d×c5 0-0 6.♘f3 ♘a6 7.a3 ♗×c3+ 8.♕×c3 ♘×c5 9.e3 b6 10.♗e2 d5 11.c×d5 ♘×d5 12.♕c2 ♗a6 13.♗×a6 ♘×a6 14.0-0 ♖c8 15.♕e2 ♘c5 16.♗d2 ♘b3 17.♖ad1 ♘×d2 18.♖×d2 ♕c7 19.♖fd1 h6 20.♘d4 ♕c4 21.e4 ♕×e2 22.♘×e2 ♘e7 23.♖d7 ♘c6 24.f4 ♖fd8 25.♘c3 ♖×d7 26.♖×d7 ♘a5 27.♖×a7 ♘c4 28.♘b5 ♘×b2 29.♘d6 ♖c1+ 30.♔f2 ♖c2+ 31.♔g3 ♘d3 32.♖a8+ ♔h7 33.♘×f7 ♖c3 34.♔g4 ♘f2+ 35.♔h4 ♘×e4 36.♖h8+ ♔g6 37.♘e5+ ♔f5 38.♖f8+ ♘f6 39.g3 ♖×a3 40.♖f7 ♖a2 41.♔h3 b5 42.♖×g7 b4 43.♖f7 b3 44.♘g4 b2 45.♖×f6+ ♔e4 46.♖×e6+ ♔d4 47.♖b6 ♔c3 48.♘×h6 ♖a4 49.♖×b2 ♔×b2 (D)



The black king is far from the kingside, so White's task should be easier.

50.♔g4 ♔c3 51.♘f5

"Losing" a tempo cannot be the correct reaction! 51.♔g5 ♔d4 52.f5 was easier.

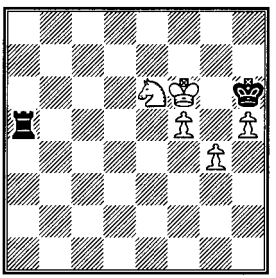
51...♔c4 52.h4 ♔d5 53.♔g5 ♔e6 54.g4?!

Allowing the black king to get in front of the pawns. More accurate was 54.♔g6 ♖a8 55.h5+–.

54...♔f7! 55.♘g3 ♖a3 56.♘h5 ♖a5+ 57.f5 ♖b5 58.♘f4 ♖a5 59.h5 ♔g7 60.♘e6+ ♔h7 61.♔f6

Not bad, but better was 61.h6 ♖b5 62.♘g7 ♖a5 63.♔h5 ♖a1 64.f6+–. When the pawns are blocked, the win is difficult...

61...♔h6! (D)



62.♘f8?

Now I am not sure that White can still win. He could have won with 62.g5+! ♔×h5 63.♘g7+!.

62...♖a6+! 63.♔e7

If 63.♘e6, then 63...♖b6! (63...♖a4? 64.g5+ ♔×h5 65.♘g7+! and White wins but only with this move! [65.g6? ♔h6=] or 63...♖a5? 64.g5+ ♔×h5 65.♘g7+ ♔g4 66.♔g6!+–) 64.g5+ (64.♔e5 ♖b5+ 65.♔d6 ♖b6+ 66.♔c7 ♖b4 67.f6 ♖×g4 68.f7 ♖g7=) 64...♔×h5 with a draw.

63...♖a4!

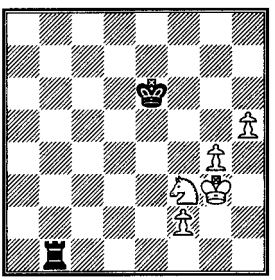
A pawn falls and the draw is near.

64.f6 ♖×g4 65.♘g6 ♖b4 66.f7 ♖b7+ ½-½

But of course, drawing this ending must be an exception. The knight and the pawns should win and the following two cases show the correct way to do it.

(166) Granda Zuniga – Rowson
Turin 2006
Catalan Opening [E05]

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.d4 d×c4 7.♕c2 a6 8.a4 c5 9.d×c5 ♘c6 10.♗e3 ♘d5 11.♗d2 ♘a5 12.♘a3 ♘b3 13.♖ad1 ♗d7 14.e4 ♗×a4 15.e×d5 e×d5 16.♘g5 g6 17.♗b4 ♘×c5 18.♕e2 ♗×d1 19.♖×d1 ♕c7 20.♖×d5 ♖ad8 21.♕×c4 ♖×d5 22.♕×d5 b5 23.♘c2 ♘a4 24.♗×e7 ♕×e7 25.h4 ♘×b2 26.♘e3 ♖d8 27.♕b3 ♘d3 28.♗d5 ♘e5 29.♕c3 h6 30.♘e4 h5 31.♔g2 b4 32.♕a1 a5 33.♕×a5 ♘g4 34.♘×g4 h×g4 35.♘g5 ♔g7 36.♗×f7 ♖d1 37.♕a8 ♕e1 38.♕g8+ ♔f6 39.♕×g6+ ♔e7 40.♕e6+ ♕×e6 41.♗×e6 ♖d6 42.♗×g4 b3 43.♗f5 ♖d5 44.♗e4 b2 45.♘f3 ♖d1 46.g4 ♔d6 47.h5 ♔e6 48.♔g3 b1♕ 49.♗×b1 ♖×b1 (D)



I think that this is a model game on how to correctly proceed.

50.♘g5+ ♔f6 51.♔f4 ♖b4+ 52.♘e4+ ♔g7 53.g5!

Correct! The black king should not be allowed to come to h6.

53...♖a4 54.f3 ♖b4 55.♔g3!

Now White prepares the further advance of his f-pawn, after his knight moves of course.

55...♖b5

Or 55...♖a4 56.♘d6 ♖a6 57.♘f5+ ♔f7 58.♔g4.

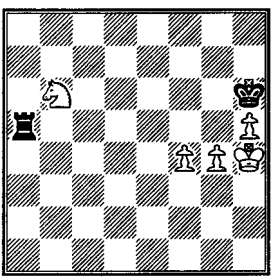
56.f4 ♖a5 57.♔g4 ♖d5 58.f5

The pawns are unstoppable now.

58...♖d1 59.f6+ ♔f7 60.g6+ ♔e6 61.♔g5 ♖g1+ 62.♔h6 ♖g4 63.♔g7 1-0

(167) Pähtz - Hou Yifan
Krasnoturinsk 2007
French Defense [C13]

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗g5 ♗e7 5.e5 ♘fd7 6.h4 ♘c6 7.♖h3 h6 8.♗×e7 ♕×e7 9.♕d2 ♘b6 10.♖g3 ♖g8 11.♘f3 a6 12.♘d1 ♕f8 13.a4 a5 14.♘c3 ♗d7 15.♘b5 0-0-0 16.b3 f6 17.0-0-0 f×e5 18.d×e5 ♔b8 19.♔b1 ♘b4 20.♖g4 ♗e8 21.♗d3 ♕e7 22.♗g6 ♗×g6 23.♖×g6 c5 24.♕f4 ♘d7 25.♕g4 ♘f8 26.♖×h6 ♕f7 27.♖h5 g6 28.♖g5 ♘h7 29.♘d6 ♕g7 30.♕×e6 ♘×g5 31.♘×g5 ♕c7 32.c3 ♘c6 33.♕×d5 ♘e7 34.♕c4 ♕c6 35.♘e6 ♖d7 36.♘×c5 ♖c7 37.♘e6 ♕×c4 38.♘×c4 ♖c6 39.♖d6 ♖e8 40.♘×a5 ♖×c3 41.♔b2 ♖cc8 42.♖b6 ♘d5 43.♖×b7+ ♔a8 44.♖b5 ♘c3 45.♖c5 ♘d1+ 46.♔c2 ♖×c5+ 47.♘×c5 ♖×e5 48.♔×d1 ♖×c5 49.♘c4 ♔b7 50.♔e2 ♔c6 51.f4 ♔d5 52.♔f3 ♖c7 53.♔g4 ♖b7 54.♘e5 ♖×b3 55.♘×g6 ♔e6 56.♘e5 ♖a3 57.h5 ♔f6 58.♘d7+ ♔g7 59.♘b6 ♔h6 60.♔h4 ♖b3 61.a5 ♖b5 62.g4 ♖×a5 (D)



Another relatively easy case – the pawns cannot be blocked, even if the enemy king is in front.

63.g5+ ♔h7 64.♔g4 ♖a1 65.♘d5

The knight should approach its king in order to create a shield from the rook's checks.

65...♖h1 66.♘f6+ ♔h8 67.♘d7

67.♔f5 ♖f1 68.g6 ♔g7 69.♘g4 +–

67...♖d1 68.♘e5 ♔h7 69.♔f5 ♖a1 70.♘f7 ♖a5+

If 70...♔g7, then 71.♔e6 and the knight will protect the king from either d6 or e5.

71.♔e6 ♔g7 72.h6+

72.f5 ♖a6+ 73.♘d6 was more accurate – the pawns should be placed on the same rank to secure the win, as in this way they cannot be blocked.

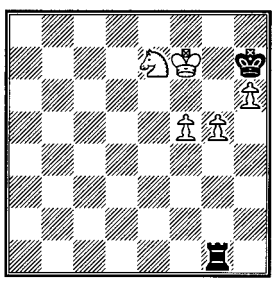
72...♔g6 73.♘e5+

Again, 73.f5+! was quicker.

73...♔h7 74.f5 ♖a6+ 75.♔e7 ♖a5

White is lucky that her knight is well placed: 75...♖a7+ 76.♘d7 and supports the pawns and the king.

76.♔d6 ♖a6+ 77.♘c6 ♖a8 78.♘e7 ♖a1 79.♔e6 ♖e1+ 80.♔f7 ♖g1 (D)



81.g6+!

Typical and good. White returns a pawn to reach a forced win.

81...♔×h6 82.f6 ♖g2 83.g7 1-0

Conclusion

In order to finalize the win, the side with the pawns should apply the following:

1. Advance the pawns to the same rank.

2. The middle pawn should not stay back by itself one rank.

3. The opponent's king should not be able to block the pawns efficiently.

4. The knight should be able to protect the king from horizontal or vertical checks.

5. The king of the stronger side should advance in harmony with his pawns.

6. When one of the pawns has to be jettisoned, it shouldn't be the middle one and we should be sure that we have a forced win.

Rook vs. the Bishop Pair

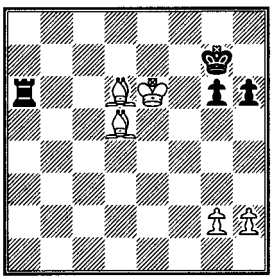
Concept

This is a theme dedicated to pure endgames, when the rook has to face the bishop pair. In general the bishop pair is nearly ineffaceable when there are many pawns on the board and the rook's owner does not have any passed pawns as counterplay. But here we will not examine such "easy" cases, where I believe that the bishop pair should win in 75% of the cases, but positions with limited material, where the realization of this "advantage" is difficult.

(168) Smyslov – Blackstock
London 1988
Budapest Gambit [A52]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e5 3.d×e5 ♘g4 4.♘f3 ♘c6 5.♗f4 ♗b4+ 6.♘bd2 ♕e7 7.e3 ♘g×e5 8.♘×e5 ♘×e5 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0 ♗×d2 11.♕×d2 d6 12.b4 a5 13.a3 ♖d8 14.♕c3 f6

15.♖fc1 ♗f5 16.f3 a×b4 17.a×b4 b6 18.e4 ♗g6 19.♖×a8 ♖×a8 20.c5 b×c5 21.b×c5 ♗f7 22.c×d6 c×d6 23.♕d4 h6 24.♖d1 ♖d8 25.♕b6 ♖d7 26.♕b4 ♔h7 27.♗g3 ♕e6 28.f4 ♕b3 29.♕×b3 ♗×b3 30.f×e5 ♗×d1 31.e6 ♖e7 32.♗×d1 ♖×e6 33.♗g4 ♖e8 34.♗×d6 g6 35.♗f3 ♔g7 36.♔f2 ♖d8 37.e5 f×e5 38.♗×e5+ ♔h7 39.♔e3 ♖e8 40.♔d4 ♖d8+ 41.♔e4 ♖d2 42.♗d4 ♖a2 43.♔e5 ♖a6 44.♗b7 ♖a4 45.♗c6 ♖b4 46.♗d5 ♖a4 47.♗c5 ♖a5 48.♗d6 ♔g7 49.♔e6 ♖a6 (D)

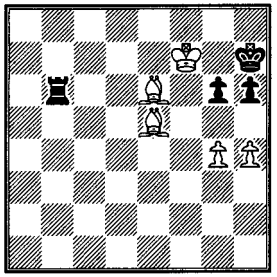


As already mentioned, the bishop pair almost always comprises an enviable and powerful force. Still, even in this case, the position is drawn as the material is greatly reduced. Black must seek the exchange of the g-pawns, after which he will be able to sacrifice his rook for the dark-square bishop, reaching a theoretical draw. White's only good idea is to try mating his opponent but this easier said than done!

50.♗b7 ♖b6 51.♗c8 ♔h7 52.♔e7 ♖b2 53.g4 ♖f2 54.♗e6 ♖f1 55.♗e5 ♖f2 56.♗f6 ♖f4 57.♔f7 ♖a4 58.♗e5 ♖a7+ 59.♔f6 ♖a6 60.h4 ♖b6 61.♔f7 (D)

61...♖b5?

Black had defended excellently up to this point and could have secured the



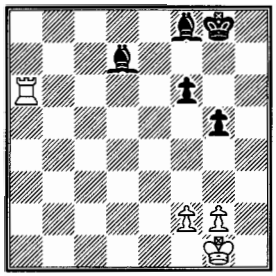
draw with 61...h5! 62.g×h5 (62.g5 ♖b7+ 63.♔f8 [63.♔f6 ♖b6] 63...♖f7+! 64.♔e8 ♖e7+!) 62...♖b7+ 63.♔f6 (63.♔f8 ♔h6! 64.h×g6 ♔×g6 65.♗g3 ♔f6 66.♗c4 ♖b4 67.♗a6 ♔g6=) 63...g×h5 64.♔g5 ♖g7+ 65.♔×h5 ♖g5+!.

62.h5!

Mate follows, so Black had to resign.

(169) Karlovich – Georgiev
Thessaloniki 2009
Sicilian Defense [B88]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗c4 ♘c6 4.d4 c×d4 5.♘×d4 ♘f6 6.♘c3 e6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.♗e3 0-0 9.♗b3 ♗d7 10.a4 a6 11.♖e1 ♘a5 12.♗a2 ♖c8 13.♕e2 ♖×c3 14.b×c3 ♘×e4 15.♕h5 ♘×c3 16.♗d2 g6 17.♕h6 ♘×a2 18.♖×a2 ♘c4 19.♗c3 e5 20.♘f3 ♖e8 21.♖aa1 ♗c6 22.♖ad1 ♗f8 23.♕h3 f6 24.♕g4 d5 25.♘d2 ♘×d2 26.♖×d2 ♕c8 27.♕h4 d4 28.♗a5 ♕d7 29.c4 ♕f5 30.♖b2 ♕e6 31.♗b6 g5 32.♕h5 ♕×c4 33.h4 h6 34.h×g5 h×g5 35.♕g6+ ♗g7 36.♖eb1 ♕f7 37.♕f5 ♗×a4 38.♗×d4 e×d4 39.♖×b7 ♖e7 40.♖×e7 ♕×e7 41.♕d5+ ♕f7 42.♖b8+ ♗f8 43.♕×d4 ♗b5 44.♕d8 ♗c6 45.♖b6 ♕d7 46.♕×d7 ♗×d7 47.♖×a6 (D)



Black is aided by the fact that his pawns are more central, but still the reduced material doesn't help him.

47...♔f7 48.g3

This creates a bad weakness on f3 and forms an easy plan for Black: to place his king on f3 and attack the f2-pawn. White should have stayed put with her pawns and just move the rook or the king, but on the other hand Black cannot take advantage of it without White's help.

48...♔g6 49.♖a7?!

An inaccuracy. 49.♔g2 ♗c8 50.♖a7 ♔f5 51.f3 ♗d6 52.♖a8 ♗b7 53.♖a7 ♗d5 54.♖a5 ♔e6 55.g4 was the correct continuation and although Black can press, I do not think that in the end he can win without "help."

49...♗c6

Now Black controls the important h1-a8 diagonal and the f3-square of course!

50.♖c7 ♗e4 51.♖c8 ♗d6 52.♖d8 ♗e5 53.♖d7

53.♔f1? ♔f5 54.♔e2 ♔g4 55.♖c8 ♗b7 56.♖c4+ ♔h3 was lost.

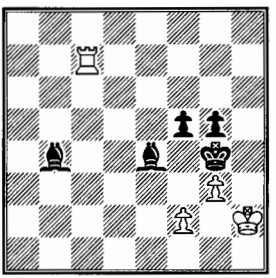
53...♔f5 54.♖a7 ♔g4 55.♖a3

It seems that White can control the f3-square, not allowing the black king to enter it, so he keeps his opponent's winning plans at bay.

55...f5 56.♔h2 ♗d6 57.♖c3 ♗e7 58.♖c7?!

White can draw by just holding the black king away from f3: 58.♖b3 ♗f6 59.♖a3 f4 60.g×f4 g×f4 61.♔g1 ♗d5 62.♖a5 ♗c4 63.♔g2. But of course this is not yet the final mistake.

58...♗b4 (D)



59.♖c1?

But this is! White should try to be active and attack the black g-pawn with 59.♖g7 ♗c3 (59...♗d2?! 60.f4!) 60.♖g8 ♗e1 61.♔g1 ♗d2 (61...♔f3 62.♖×g5 ♗×f2+ 63.♔h2=) 62.♖d8 (62.f4? ♔×g3 63.f×g5 ♗g2 64.♖e8 f4 65.g6 ♗e3+ 66.♖×e3+ f×e3 67.g7 ♗d5−+) 62...♗a5 63.♖g8 when Black has no winning plan, as 63...♔f3 64.♖×g5 ♗b6 65.♔h2 leads to a draw.

59...♔f3

And now Black wins, as he carries out the plan mentioned in the first diagram.

60.♔g1 ♗d3 61.♖d1 ♔e2 62.♖a1 ♗c5 63.♖a2+ ♔f3 64.♖b2 g4 65.♖d2 ♗e2!

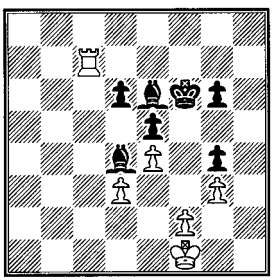
That's the trick – the f2-pawn is gone and the rest was easy.

66.♖d5 ♗×f2+ 67.♔h1 ♔×g3 68.♖×f5 ♗f3+ 69.♖×f3+ ♔×f3 0–1

With more pawns on the board and more weaknesses, things are easier for the bishop pair. With the help of the king, an assault can be successfully directed toward the weaknesses.

(170) Ljubojevic – Miles
Tilburg 1985
Sicilian Defense [B30]

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 ♘c6 3.♘f3 g6 4.a3 ♗g7 5.♖b1 e6 6.b4 b6 7.♗b2 d6 8.♗b5 ♘ge7 9.♘d5 0 0 10.♘f6+ ♔h8 11.♘g5 h6 12.h4 a6 13.♗×c6 ♘×c6 14.♕f3 e5 15.♘fh7 ♔g8 16.♘×f8 h×g5 17.♘×g6 g4 18.♕e3 ♘d4 19.♕g5 ♕×g5 20.h×g5 f×g6 21.b×c5 b×c5 22.♗×d4 c×d4 23.d3 ♗f8 24.♔e2 ♖a7 25.c4 d×c3 26.♖hc1 ♖c7 27.♖b3 ♔f7 28.♖c×c3 ♖×c3 29.♖×c3 ♗d7 30.♖c7 ♔e6 31.♖a7 ♗b5 32.a4 ♗×a4 33.♖×a6 ♗d7 34.g3 ♗e7 35.♖a8 ♗×g5 36.♖b8 ♗c1 37.♖b3 ♔f6 38.♖b7 ♗e6 39.♖c7 ♗a3 40.♖a7 ♗c5 41.♖c7 ♗d4 42.♔f1 (D)



Here White has two weaknesses, the d- and f-pawns, so Black has excellent winning chances.

42...d5! 43.e×d5

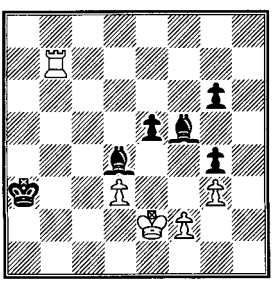
If White allows Black to capture on e4 with 43.♖c6 d×e4 44.d×e4 then his two weaknesses (e4 and f2) remains and Black can attack them via b1 or g6: 44...♔f7 45.♖c7+ ♔g8 46.♔e2 g5 47.♔e1 (47.♖b7 ♗c4+ 48.♔e1 ♗d3) 47...♗f7 48.♔e2 ♗g6 49.f3 (the f2 weakness is gone but a new one has appeared at g3) 49...♗h5 50.f×g4 ♗×g4+ 51.♔d3 (51.♔e1 ♗f3) 51...♗f3 52.♖e7 g4−+, as ...♔f8 and ...♗f2 decide.

43...♗×d5 44.♔e2 ♗e6

Black's plan is now simple: he will place his bishop on f5, protecting all his pawns and attacking the white d-pawn, and then he will penetrate with his king via the queenside, targetting the d-pawn.

45.♖c6 ♔e7 46.♔e1 ♔d7 47.♖a6 ♗f5! 48.♔e2 ♔c7 49.♖a8 White is in *zugzwang*, so he has to allow the black king's entrance: 49.♖f6 ♗c5 (49...e4? 50.♖f7+; 49...♔b7 50.♖d6 ♗b6 51.♖d5) 50.♖a6 ♗b6.

49...♔b6 50.♖b8+ ♔a5 51.♖b7 ♔a4 52.♖b8 ♔a3 53.♖b7 (D)



If 53.♖d8, then 53...♔b2 54.♖d6 ♔c2 55.♖c6+ ♗c3 56.♖d6 g5! (*zugzwang*) 57.♖d5 ♗d4−+.

53...♗e6!

Best. After the inaccurate 53...Ka2?! 54.Rb8 Bb2 55.Rb7 Kb1 56.Kd2 Black can make no progress (he has to come back to this position). Now he gives up an unimportant pawn in order to march with his king.

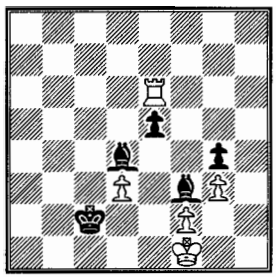
54.♖g7

White has no choice, as he cannot save himself by guarding the b-file: 54.♖b8 ♗d5 55.♖b5 ♗f3+ 56.♔e1 ♗c3+ 57.♔f1 ♗d1 and ...♗b3 with ...♔b2-c2 to follow.

54...♗d5 55.♖×g6 ♗f3+ 56.♔f1 ♔b2

The king finally succeed to penetrate.

57.♖a6 ♔c2 58.♖e6 (D)



58...♔d2!

The f-pawn is the real target. The d-pawn will be captured by the bishop and then it will be placed on f3.

59.♖e8 ♗e2+ 60.♔g2 ♔e1 61.♖f8 ♗f1+ 62.♔g1 ♗×d3 63.♖f7 ♗e4 64.♔h2

64.♖f8 ♗f3

64...♔f1!

Not falling for White's last trap: 64...♗×f2? 65.♖×f2=.

65.♖f8 ♗f3 0-1

The Bishop Pair vs. the Exchange

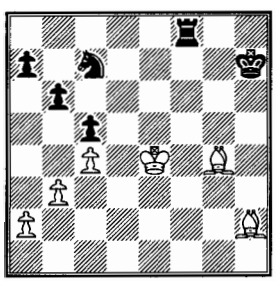
This is a very sensitive theme which we do not usually come across in chess magazines and other publications. The bishop pair can be excellent compensation for sacrificing or losing (blunders exist!) the exchange, especially when the opponent has a knight. Their combined power in cooperation with other pieces can form a determined line of defense. The first example is from the last match between two famous players. The next two were firstly analyzed by endgame expert Karsten Müller, who kindly provided most of the analysis and I would like to thank him for that.

(171) Spassky – Fischer

Belgrade 1992

King's Indian Defense [E80]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.f3 c5 6.d×c5 d×c5 7.♕×d8+ ♔×d8 8.♗e3 ♘fd7 9.♘ge2 b6 10.000 ♘a6 11.g3 ♘c7 12.f4 e6 13.♗h3 ♔e7 14.♖hf1 h6 15.e5 ♗b7 16.g4 ♖ad8 17.♘g3 f6 18.♘ce4 f×e5 19.f5 ♗×e4 20.♘×e4 g×f5 21.g×f5 ♘f6 22.♖g1 ♖×d1+ 23.♔×d1 ♗f8 24.♘×f6 ♔×f6 25.♖f1 e×f5 26.♖×f5+ ♔g7 27.♖×e5 ♗d6 28.♖e4 ♗×h2 29.♔e2 h5 30.♖e7+ ♔f6 31.♖d7 ♗e5 32.b3 h4 33.♔f3 ♖g8 34.♗g4 h3 35.♖h7 h2 36.♗f4 ♖f8 37.♗×e5+ ♔g6+ 38.♔e4 ♔×h7 39.♗×h2 (D)



White is an exchange down but his bishop-pair is strong and form a wall of problems for Black who has to play his best in order to cash the point.

39...♖e8+ 40.♔f5 ♘e6 41.♔f6 ♘d4 42.♗d6 ♖e4 43.♗d7 ♖e2 44.a4 ♖b2 45.♗b8 a5 46.♗a7 ♖×b3 47.♔e5

White tries to combine his active pieces and save the day. As things are more difficult as it looks, Black has to be accurate.

47...♘f3+ 48.♔d6 ♘d2 49.♗e6 ♖b4 50.♔c6

But finally White's activity is not enough compensation for his material deficit.

50...♘b3?

Black had to opt for 50...♘×c4 51.♗×c4 ♖×c4 52.♗×b6 (52.♔×b6 ♖×a4 53.♔×c5 ♔g6 54.♗b6 ♖a2 55.♔c4 a4−+) 52...♖×a4 53.♔×c5 ♖a1

(53...♖a2 54.♔c4 a4 55.♔b4 ♔g6 56.♗e3 ♔f5 57.♗c1 ♔e4 58.♗a3 ♔d4 59.♔×a4 ♔c4−+) 54.♔b5 a4 55.♗d4 ♖d1 56.♗c5 ♖d5 57.♔c4 ♖×c5+ 58.♔×c5 a3−+.

51.♗d5

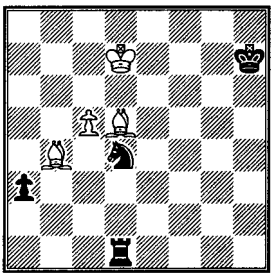
The careless 51.♗×b6? returns the favor: 51...♘d4+ 52.♔×c5 ♘×e6+−+.

51...♖×a4

51...♘d4+ 52.♔c7=

52.♗×b6 ♖a1 53.♗×c5 a4

Black cannot win even after 53...♘×c5 54.♔×c5 a4 55.♔d6 a3 56.c5 ♖d1 57.c6 a2 58.c7 a1♕ 59.c8♕ ♕f6+ 60.♕e6=. **54.♗b4 a3 55.c5 ♘d4+ 56.♔d7 ♖d1** (D)



After his mistake on the 51st move Black has played well and he created the maximum problems to White. Unfortunately for him the bishops are strong and achieve their targets when combined!

57.♗×a3!! ♘c2

Or 57...♘b5 58.♗b4! (58.c6? ♖×d5+ 59.♔e6 ♖d1−+) 58...♖×d5+ 59.♔c6=.

58.c6 ♖×d5+

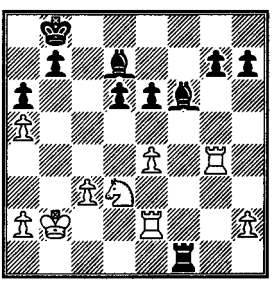
58...♘×a3 59.c7 ♖×d5+ 60.♔c6 ♖d1=

59.♗d6

Draw agreed: 59...♘d4 60.c7 ♖×d6+ 61.♔×d6 ♘b5+ 62.♔d7 ♘×c7 63.♔×c7 **½-½**

(172) Chraibi – Winnicki
Hamburg 2005
Sicilian Defense [B54]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 a6 5.♘c3 e6 6.♗e3 ♕c7 7.♕d2 ♘f6 8.♗e2 ♘bd7 9.f3 ♗e7 10.g4 ♘e5 11.g5 ♘fd7 12.f4 ♘c4 13.♗×c4 ♕×c4 14.b3 ♕c7 15.f5 ♘e5 16.0-0-0 ♗d7 17.f×e6 f×e6 18.♘ce2 ♘g4 19.♖hg1 ♘×e3 20.♕×e3 ♕a5 21.♔b1 0-0-0 22.♕d3 ♔b8 23.♘f4 ♕e5 24.♖g4 ♖c8 25.♖d2 ♖hf8 26.♘de2 ♗b5 27.♕d4 ♖c5 28.♕×e5 ♖×e5 29.♘d4 ♗d7 30.♖e2 ♗×g5 31.♘d3 ♖f1+ 32.♔b2 ♖a5 33.b4 ♗f6 34.b×a5 ♗×d4+ 35.c3 ♗f6(D)



White has won the exchange but Black's compensation is excellent as she has at her disposal the bishop pair, a pawn, an active rook and certainly a much better pawn structure. So, the position should be dynamically balanced.

36.♖gg2?!

A bit passive. White should consider 36.e5 d×e5 37.♘×e5 ♗b5 38.c4 ♗e8 39.♖ge4 or 36.♖f4 ♖h1 37.♖ff2 ♗b5 38.♖e3 ♔c7 39.e5 d×e5 40.♘×e5 when White's knight has found a good post, which is very important.

36...♗b5 37.♖d2 ♖f3?!

37...♔c7!? according to the old positional rule that "the worst placed piece should be improved" was more precise.

38.♔c2?

Again it was better to improve the prospects of the knight: 38.♖g3 ♖f1 39.e5! d×e5 40.♘c5 and White is not

worse: 40...♗c4 41.♖h3 ♗g5 42.♖d7 ♖f2+ 43.♔a1 ♖f1+=.

38...♗c4?

38...♗a4+ 39.♔b2 ♗c6 would be very unpleasant for White in view of his weak pawns. A sample variation might go 40.e5 (40.♖g4 h5 41.♖g3 ♗×e4 or 40.♖ge2? ♗b5 41.♔c2 ♗g5−+) 40...d×e5 41.♘b4 ♗b5 42.♘c2 ♗c4∓.

39.a3 ♖f1?!

Again, activating the king with 39...♔c7 is of primary importance.

40.♘b2! ♗b5

40...♗a2 was called for; White can keep the balance: 41.♘d1 ♖f4 42.♘f2 ♔c7 43.♘g4.

41.♖×d6 ♖f3 42.♖×e6?!

Without the c3-pawn, White's king lacks shelter, and this will be his undoing in the end. 42.♘d1! ♔c7 43.♖×e6 ♗c4 44.♖×f6 g×f6=.

42...♖×c3+ 43.♔d1

The other king's moves also offer nothing: 43.♔b1 ♗d7 44.♖d6 ♗c6∓ or 43.♔d2 ♖b3∓.

43...♗d7 44.♖d6 ♔c7 45.♖dd2

45.♖d3?! ♗a4+ 46.♔e1 ♖c1+ 47.♘d1 ♖a1 gives Black a strong bind. A real nightmare for the poor pinned knight.

45...♖×a3 46.♖c2+?!

46.♘c4!? ♗a4+ 47.♔e1 ♗h4+ 48.♔e2 ♗b5 49.♖c2 (49.♖×g7+ ♔c6 50.♖c2 ♖a2! 51.♔d1 ♗a4 52.♘e3+ ♗×c2+ 53.♘×c2 ♖a4 54.♖×h7 ♖×e4∓) 49...♗f6∓

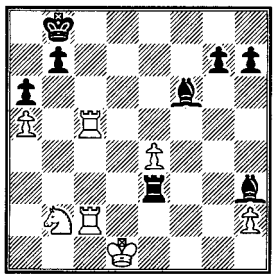
46...♔b8?!

46...♗c6∓ certainly looks more promising.

47.♖c5

47.e5 ♗×e5 48.♘c4 doesn't solve White's problems in view of 48...♖a1+ 49.♔d2 ♗c6! (49...♗f5 50.♘×e5 ♗×c2 51.♖×g7 [51.♔×c2? ♖a2+−+] 51...♖a2∓) 50.♖e2 ♗f6∓.

47...♗h3 48.♖gc2 ♖e3 (D)



49.e5

49.♔d2 ♖×e4 50.♖2c4 ♖e8 51.♘d3 ♗d7 is horrible for White. But he should have tried 49.♘c4!? ♖×e4 50.♘b6 ♔a7 51.♔d2 (51.♖c8? ♗×c8 52.♖×c8 ♖d4+ 53.♔e2 ♖d8−+) 51...♖e8∓.

49...♗g4+

49...♗e7 50.♔d2 ♗×c5 51.♖×c5 ♖e4∓ was the natural follow-up.

50.♔d2 ♗g5! 51.e6 ♖e5+ 52.♔d3 ♗f5+ 53.♔d4 ♖e4+ 54.♔d5?

54.♔d3 was forced, although Black's winning chances are excellent: 54...♖e3+ (54...g6 55.♖×f5 g×f5 56.♖c5 ♖×e6 57.♖×f5 ♗e7∓) 55.♔d4 ♗×c2 56.♖×g5 ♖×e6 57.♖×g7 ♖h6∓.

54...♗f6 55.♘c4?

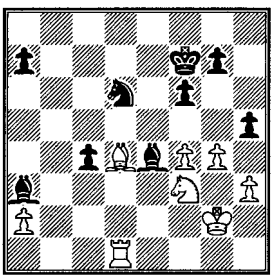
A blunder, but also hopeless was the alternative 55.♖d2 ♖e5+ 56.♔d6 ♖×e6+ 57.♔d5 ♖e5+ 58.♔d6 ♖e8 59.♖cd5 ♖c8−+.

55...♖d4# 0-1

(173) Hausner - Müller
Hamburg 1990
Catalan Opening [E09]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 c6 4.g3 ♘f6 5.♗g2 ♘bd7 6.♘bd2 ♗e7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♕c2 b6 9.e4 d×e4 10.♘×e4 ♘×e4 11.♕×e4 ♗b7 12.♖d1 ♕c8 13.♕c2 c5 14.d5

e×d5 15.c×d5 ♗d6 16.b3 ♖e8 17.♗b2 f6 18.♘h4 ♕c7 19.♘f5 ♘e5 20.♖e1 ♖ad8 21.♖ad1 ♗c8 22.f4 ♘f7 23.♘e3 ♖e7 24.♘f5 ♖ee8 25.♗e4 h6 26.♕d3 b5 27.♖c1 c4 28.♕f3 ♗b4 29.♖ed1 ♗c5+ 30.♔h1 ♖×e4 31.♕×e4 ♕d7 32.♘d4 ♕×d5 33.♕×d5 ♖×d5 34.♘f3 ♗b7 35.♖×d5 ♗×d5 36.♔g2 ♘d6 37.g4 h5 38.h3 ♔f7 39.♖d1 ♗e4 40.♗d4 ♗a3 41.b×c4 b×c4 (D)



White has an extra exchange, but he should not underestimate the power of the bishop pair.

42.♗×a7?

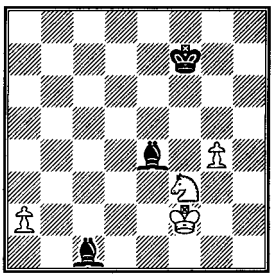
Allowing the c-pawn to advance further; this can turn out extremely risky. With 42.♔f2 White would stand better.

42...h×g4 43.h×g4 c3 44.♗e3

44.♖e1 c2 45.♗e3 transposes.

44...c2 45.♖e1

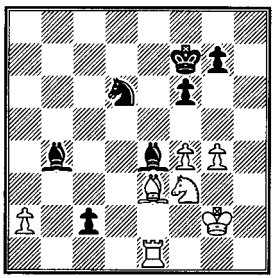
Certainly not 45.♖a1? ♘c4 46.♗c1 ♗c5! 47.a4 ♗d4 (the raking bishop pair, sometimes called the *Horwitz Bishops*, dominates the board and White is completely lost) 48.♖a2 ♗e3 49.♖a1 ♘d2 50.♔g3 (50.♖a3 ♗×f3+ 51.♔h3 ♗×f4 52.♖×f3 ♘×f3 53.♗×f4 ♘g1+ 54.♔g2 ♘e2 55.♗e3 c1♕ 56.♗×c1 ♘×c1 57.a5 ♘d3 58.a6 ♘f4+ 59.♔f3 ♘e6 60.a7 ♘c7−+) 50...♗×f3 51.♗×d2 ♗×d2 52.♔×f3 c1♕ 53.♖×c1 ♗×c1 54.a5 ♗a3 55.a6 ♗c5−+. Another practical try is 45.♖×d6? but the position after 45...♗×d6 46.♗c1 g5 47.f×g5 f×g5 48.♗×g5 (48.♔f2 ♗×f3 49.♔×f3 ♗f4−+) 48...♗a3 49.♔f2 c1♕ 50.♗×c1 ♗×c1 (D)



is theoretically lost as both white pawns will fall prey to the bishops and the pawnless ending two bishops versus knight is always won for the bishops, if the side with the knight can't force an immediate draw. This fact was discovered by Ken Thompson using a computer database. His result overturned pre-database theory, which assumed that the ending is drawn if the defender can reach the "Kling and Horwitz" position (W: ♔d5, ♗a4, ♗f8 – B: ♔b6, ♘b7 – see J.Nunn in *Secrets of Minor-Piece Endings*, p.277). John Nunn deals with the subject very extensively in *Secrets of Minor-Piece Endings* (pp.265-281).

Finally, 45.♖f1 is playable: 45...♘b5 (45...♘c4? 46.♗c1 ♗×c1 47.♖×c1 ♘d2 48.♖×c2±) 46.♔g3 (46.♗c1? ♗×c1 47.♖×c1 ♘c3−+ or 46.♔f2 ♘c3 47.♘d4 ♗b2 48.♖c1 [48.♘×c2 ♗×c2 49.♗d4 ♘e4+ 50.♔e3 ♗a3∞] 48...♗×c1 49.♗×c1 ♘×a2 50.♔e3 ♗h7 51.♔d2= or, finally, 46.♖e1 ♗b4 47.♖c1 ♘c3 48.♔f2∞) 46...♗d3 (46...♘c3 47.♘d4 ♗b2 48.♗c1! ♗×c1 49.♖×c1 ♘×a2 50.♖×c2=) 47.♖e1 ♘c3 48.♘d4 ♗b2 (48...♘×a2 49.♖a1 ♗b2 50.♖×a2 ♗×d4 51.♖×c2 ♗×c2 52.♗×d4=) 49.♘×c2 ♗×c2 50.♗d4=.

45...♗b4 (D)



After 45...♘c4?! 46.♗c1 ♗×c1 47.♖×c1 ♘d2 White has the resource 48.♖×c2!±.

46.♖e2?

White is in panic! He could hold the balance with precise play: 46.♖c1! ♘c4 47.♔f2 ♘b2 (47...♗a3 48.♘d4 ♗×c1 49.♗×c1=) 48.♘d4 (48.♘e1? ♘d1+ 49.♔e2 ♗×e1 50.♔×e1 ♘×e3−+) 48...♘d3+ (48...♘d1+ 49.♔e2 ♘c3+ 50.♔f2=) 49.♔e2 ♘×c1+ 50.♗×c1=.

46...♗d3 47.♘d4 ♘c4 48.♗c1

White's rook is trapped after 48.♘×c2 ♗×c2 49.♗c1 ♗d3 50.♖f2 ♗e1 51.♖f3 ♗e4−+.

48...♗c3

Now Black wins the exchange back while preserving his strong passed c-pawn alive.

49.♘b5!

49.♖×c2? ♗×d4−+.

49...♗×e2 50.♘×c3 ♗×g4 51.♘d5 ♗e6 52.♘b4 ♗f5 53.♔f2 ♗e4 54.♘a6 ♔e6 55.♘c5+ ♔d5 56.♘b3

White must avoid 56.♘×e4? 56...♔×e4 57.♔e2 ♔d4−+.

56...♗f5 57.♔e2 ♗g6 58.♘d2 ♘b6 59.♘f1 ♔d4 60.♗b2+ ♔e4 61.♗c1 ♔d4 62.♗b2+ ♔e4 63.♗c1

63.♘e3? ♘a4 64.♗c1 ♘c3+ 65.♔d2 ♘×a2 -+

63...♗h5+ 64.♔f2?

64.♔d2! was called for, when it is not totally clear if Black is winning: 64...♔×f4 65.♔×c2+ ♔f3 66.♗b2∓.

64...♔d3! 65.♘e3 ♗f7 66.a3 ♘a4 67.♘g2 ♘c5 68.♘e1+ ♔c3 69.♔e3 ♗g6 70.♗d2+ ♔b2 71.♘×c2 ♗×c2 And Black wins. **72.♗b4 ♘e6 73.♗d6 ♔b3 74.♔d2 ♗e4 75.♔e3 f5 76.♗e7 g6 77.♗d6 ♗c6 78.♔d3 ♗b5+ 79.♔e3 ♔c4 80.♗e5 ♔d5 81.♗f6 ♘c5 82.♗e7 ♘e4 83.♗f8 ♘d6 84.♔f3 ♘c4 85.♗e7 ♔d4 86.♗b4 ♗c6+ 87.♔g3 ♔e4 88.♗c5 ♘b2 89.♗d6 ♘d3 90.♗c7 ♘c5 91.♗d6 ♘e6 92.♗b8 ♗e8 93.♗d6 ♘d4 0-1**

Conclusion

The bishop pair is a strong weapon when facing a rook but reduced material can help the defender. The power of the bishop pair can also be seen in those situations in which the side with the bishops is down the exchange. The bishop pair may then provide very good compensation.

Pawns on the Seventh Rank

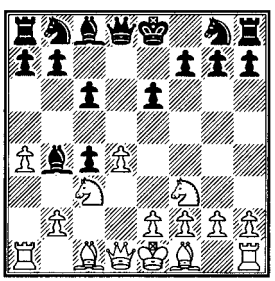
Concept

By definition, a pawn is passed when it can advance to promotion without encountering any opposing pawns in its path. Possession of a passed pawn and the ability to exploit its potential is a strategic element that can often determine the result of the game. In general, the side possessing a passed pawn has clearer plans and aims. The other side usually seeks ways to blockade it or, if this proves impossible, obtain counterplay on another part of the board.

One good option is "harassment" of the opponent's king. In practice this

option often proves very effective, but unfortunately it is not always available! When a passed pawn (or even better, two!) succeeds in advancing to the seventh rank, it becomes a nearly unstoppable force. Two connected passed pawn well-advanced can be worth their weight in gold! In many cases they have proved stronger even than a queen. Well, of course there always exist exceptions and that what we will examine first in this survey.

(174) Kokolias – Sigalas
Athens 2005
Semi-Slav Defense [D31]
1.c4 c6 2.♘f3 d5 3.d4 e6 4.♘c3 d×c4 5.a4 ♗b4 (D)

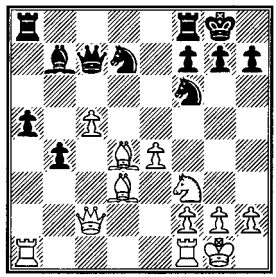


The famous and extremely complicated Noteboom variation. Usually White generates a better center and attacking possibilities, when Black aims for the endgame counting on his strong queenside pawns. All in all, we have a tactical battle ahead with possibilities for both sides.

6.e3 b5 7.♗d2 ♗b7 8.a×b5 ♗×c3 9.♗×c3 c×b5 10.b3 a5 11.b×c4 b4 12.♗b2 ♘f6 13.♗d3 0-0 14.0-0 ♘bd7 15.♕c2 ♕c7 16.e4 e5 17.c5 e×d4

Black's main alternative is 17...♗a6 18.♖fc1 e×d4 19.♗×d4 ♗×d3 20.♕×d3 ♕c6∞ Levitt-Flear, London 1990.

18.♗×d4 (D)



18...♘g4

18...h6 seem to be most players' preference these days: 19.♖fe1 (19.♖fc1 ♗c6 20.♕b2 [20.e5 ♘d5∞ Jasnikowsky-Sherbakov, Katowice 1992] 20...♖fe8∞ Leonidov-Khavsky, Tula 2004) 19...♖fe8 20.h3 [20.e5 ♘d5 21.♗b5 ♖e6∞ Krizsany-Sveshnikov, Nova Gorica 1997] 20...♗c6 21.e5 ♘d5∞ Candela Perez-Tregubov, Ubeda 2000.

19.♗b5

White has some alternatives at his disposal:

(a) 19.♗c4!?

(a1) 19...♕f4 20.c6 ♗×c6 21.♗×f7+ ♕×f7 22.♕×c6 ♖fc8 23.♕b5 ♖cb8 24.♕g5 ♘gf6∞ Bukal-Trabert, Budapest 1994.

(a2) 19...♘de5 20.♘×e5 ♘×e5 21.♗d5 ♘c6∞.

(a3) 19...♗c6 20.h3 ♘ge5 21.♘×e5 ♘×e5 22.♗d5 ♘g6= Batsiashvili-Paichadze, Batumi 2003.

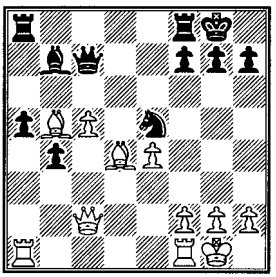
(a4) 19...♗a6 20.c6 ♘de5 21.♘×e5 ♘×e5 22.♗×e5 ♕×e5 23.♖fd1 ♗×c4 24.♕×c4 g6 25.♖ac1 ♖fc8 26.g3 ♕e6 ½-½ Dizdar-Bachmayr, Austria 1997.

(b) 19.h3?! ♘ge5 20.♘×e5 ♘×e5 21.♗b5 ♘g6 22.♖fc1 ♗c6∓ Lacrosse-Strijbos, Netherlands 1994.

(c) 19.♖fc1?! ♗c6 20.♕d2 (20.e5? ♗×f3 21.g×f3 ♘d×e5 22.♗×h7+ ♔h8 23.♗e4 [23.♕f5 ♕c6 24.♗×e5 ♘×e5 25.♕×e5 ♔×h7∓] 23...♖ad8∓

Nesterov-Relange, Groningen 1993) 20...♘de5 21.♘×e5 ♘×e5 22.♗e2 ♖fb8∓.

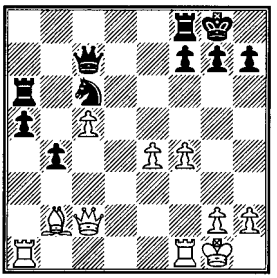
19...♘de5 20.♘×e5 ♘×e5 (D)



21.f4

White has also tried 21.♕b2 f6 22.♗×e5 f×e5? (22...♕×e5 is safe: 23.♕×e5 f×e5 24.c6 ♗c8 25.♖fc1 ♗e6=) 23.c6 ♗c8 (23...♗a6 24.♕a2+ ♔h8 25.♕×a5±) 24.♖fc1 (24.♗c4+ ♔h8 25.♗d5 ♗a6∞) 24...♕b6 25.♕×e5! a4!? 26.♖c5? (26.♗×a4? ♖×a4 27.♖×a4 ♕×f2+ 28.♔h1 ♕f1+; 26.♕c5! ♕×c5 27.♖×c5 b3 28.♗c4+ [28.♖×a4 b2!] 28...♔h8 29.♗×b3+−) 26...b3∞ Zueger-Klinger, Bern 1991. We are still of course in theoretical ground and surely both opponents have done their extensive homework; it is impossible to play this variation otherwise.

21...♘c6 22.♗b2 ♗a6 23.♗×a6 ♖×a6 (D)



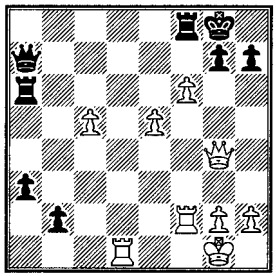
24.♕e2?

A wrong idea. Preferable is 24.♕c4 ♕b7 25.♖f3 ♔h8 26.♖g3 f6 27.e5 with some initiative to White, as in Becker-Kaid, Goch 1995.

24...♕a7! 25.♖f2

White is in trouble. The other option, 25.f5 a4 26.f6 a3 27.♔h1 ♖a8 28.♕h5 ♘d8 29.♗c1 ♖×f6∓, also fails to impress.

25...a4∓ 26.♕g4 f5! 27.e×f5 a3 28.♗e5 b3 29.f6 b2 30.♖d1 ♘×e5 31.f×e5 (D)



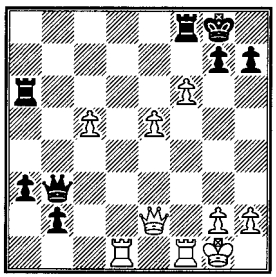
31...♕f7?!

Black loses his way in this labyrinth of tactical variations. He could crown his efforts with the logical 31...♔h8!. Although it does not look easy, he can win after 32.f×g7+ ♕×g7 33.♖×f8+ ♕×f8 34.♕d4 ♖e6!.

32.♕e2 ♕b3?!

Again 32...♕e6!, blocking the white pawns.

33.♖ff1 (D)



33...a2?

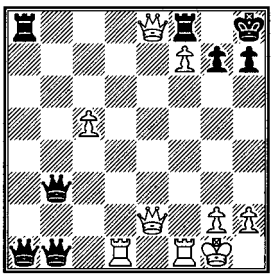
Black loses his entire advantage. He should have played 33...♖aa8! 34.♕e4 ♖ab8! −+.

34.f7+ ♔h8

Bad is 34...♖×f7?? 35.♖d8+ or 34...♕×f7? 35.♖×f7 a1♕ 36.♖×f8+ ♔×f8 37.♔f2±.

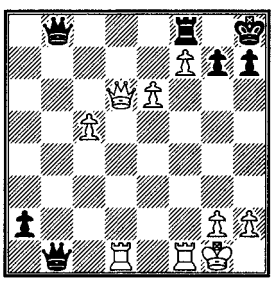
35.♕×a6

White had a second and more interesting way to draw: 35.e6 b1♕ (35...♖×e6? 36.♖d8! h6 37.♖×f8+ ♔h7 38.♖h8+ ♔×h8 39.f8♕+ ♔h7 40.♕f5+ ♔h8 41.♕f×e6 ♕×e6 42.♕×e6 a1♕ 43.♕c8+ ♔h7 44.♕f5+ ♔h8 45.♕b1; 35...♕×e6? 36.♖d8 ♖×d8 37.♕×e6) 36.e7 ♖aa8 37.e8♕ a1♕ (D)



when we have a very rare situation with five queens on board. But this cannot be considered a tactical position, as with a forced series of moves the draw becomes clear: 38.♖×b1 ♕b×b1 39.♖×b1 ♕×b1+ 40.♕e1 ♕×e1+ 41.♕×e1 ♖×f7. Finally it must be mentioned that 35.♖d8? does not work: 35...♖×d8 36.f8♕+ ♖×f8 37.♖×f8+ ♕g8−+.

35...b1♕ 36.♕d6! ♕b8 37.e6 (D)



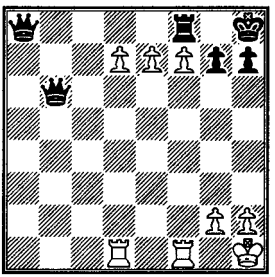
37...♕×d6

37...a1♕ leads to another draw: 38.♕×b8 ♕×b8 39.♖×a1 ♕c8 40.♖fe1 ♕×c5+ 41.♔h1 ♕e7 (41...♕f2 42.e7 ♕×f7 43.e×f8♕+ ♕×f8) 42.♖ad1 g5 43.♖d7 ♖×f7 44.♖×e7 ♖×e7.

38.c×d6 a1♕ 39.e7!?

39.♖×b1 ♕d4+ 40.♔h1 ♕×d6 41.♖fe1 transposes to the draw given above.

39...♕b6+ 40.♔h1 ♕a8 41.d7 (D)



Three pawns on the seventh rank, ready to queen! But White is unlucky as Black has a clear way to draw!

41...♕×g2+!

41...h6? 42.e×f8♕+ ♕×f8 43.d8♕ ♕f×d8 44.♖×d8+ ♕×d8 45.f8♕+ ♕×f8 46.♖×f8+

42.♔×g2 ♕g6+ 43.♔h1 ♕e4+ ½-½

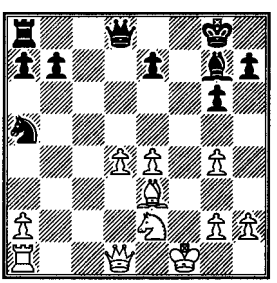
White cannot avoid perpetual check. A really impressive game.

(175) Kramnik – Kasparov

Linares 1999

Grünfeld Defense [D88]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.c×d5 ♘×d5 5.e4 ♘×c3 6.b×c3 ♗g7 7.♗c4 c5 8.♘e2 ♘c6 9.♗e3 0-0 10.0-0 ♗g4 11.f3 ♘a5 12.♗×f7+ ♖×f7 13.f×g4 ♖×f1+ 14.♔×f1 c×d4 15.c×d4 (D)



15...e5!?

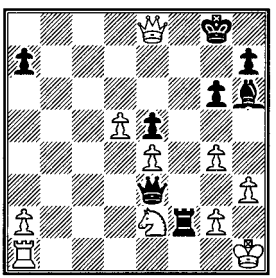
The "old" option is 15...♕b6 16.♔g1 ♕e6 17.♕d3 ♕×g4 18.♖f1±

Karpov-Kasparov, Seville 1987. Of course, many games have been played since.

16.d5 ♘c4 17.♕d3 ♘×e3+ 18.♕×e3 ♕h4 19.h3 ♗h6 20.♕d3 ♖f8+ 21.♔g1 ♕f2+ 22.♔h1 ♕e3! 23.♕c4

23.♕×e3 is not dangerous for Black: 23...♗×e3 24.♖d1 ♖f2 25.♘g1 ♔f7 26.♖d3 ♗b6 27.♖f3+ ♔e7 28.♖×f2 ♗×f2 29.♘f3 ♔d6 30.g3 ♗×g3 31.♔g2 ♗f4 32.♔f2 ♔c5 33.♔e2 b5 34.♔d3 ½-½ Kramnik-Shirov, Cazorla 1998.

23...b5 24.♕×b5 ♖f2 25.♕e8+ (D)



25...♗f8!

A strong novelty. Previously 25...♖f8 had been played: 26.♕e6+ ♔h8 27.g5 ♗×g5 28.♕×e5+ ♗f6 29.♕d6 ♗g7 30.♘g1 ♕×e4 31.♖c1 ± Van Wely-Shirov, Belgrade 1999.

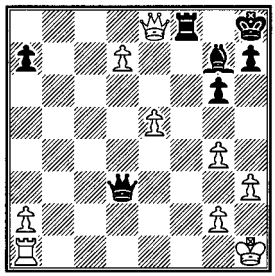
27.d6! ♕×e2!

Black avoided 27...♕×e4 28.♖g1 ♗×d6 29.♕×d6 ♕×e2 30.♕b8+ ♔g7 31.♕×a7+ ♖f7 32.♕c5 ⩲ ♕×a2 33.♕×e5+ ♔g8 34.♖a1 where although he will not lose, he will have to suffer for the half-point.

28.♕×e5+!

White rightly avoided a draw: 28.d7 ♕×e4 29.♖g1 ♖f3! 30.g5 (30.g×f3 ♕×f3+ 31.♔h2 ♕f2+ 32.♖g2 ♕f4 ±) 30...♗e7! 31.g×f3 ♕×f3+ 32.♖g2 ♕f1+ 33.♔h2 ♕f4 ±.

28...♗g7 29.♕e8+ ♖f8 30.d7 ♕d3 31.e5! (D)



Obviously the strong passed d-pawn on the seventh rank is quite valuable. Now White's plan is clear: to push the central e-pawn, creating two connected pawns on the seventh rank! There is not much that Black can do about that – or maybe there is?

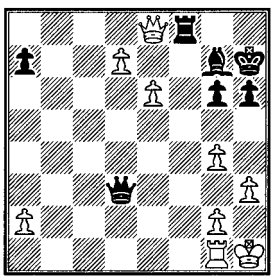
31...h6!!

The point of this move will become clear in a few moves. No help was 31...♔g8? 32.♖g1 ♗×e5 33.♕e6+ ♖f7 34.♕×e5 ♕×d7 35.♖b1 ±.

32.e6

32.♕e7 ♔h7 33.e6 ♕d5 34.♖g1 ♖f3!=.

32...♔h7! 33.♖g1 (D)



Forced, as Black was threatening to win with 33...♖f1+: 33.e7?? ♖f1+ 34.♖×f1 ♕×f1+ 35.♔h2 ♗e5+ 36.g3 ♕f2+ 37.♔h1 ♕f3+ 38.♔g1 ♗d4+ 39.♔h2 ♕f2+ 40.♔h1 ♕g1#.

33...♖f3!

Now the idea behind 31...h6! becomes clear. White cannot avoid the draw.

34.♕b8

34.e7?? ♖×h3+ 35.g×h3 ♕×h3# is, of course, out of the question!

34...♖×h3+ 35.g×h3 ♕e4+! ½-½

And the players agreed to a draw. It is strange that there was another identical game which lasted two more moves: 36.♖g2 ♕e1+ 37.♖g1 ♕e4+ ½-½ Kundrak-Toth, Miskolc 1999. But probably this was just an "imitated" game between two lower rated players...

So, one might get the wrong impression that passed pawns on the seventh rank are not dangerous at all! In my opinion, the above games are the exceptions that prove the rule: pawns on the seventh rank are an unbelievable force! See the next game:

(176) Kortschnoi – Najdorf
Wijk aan Zee 1971
Queen's Gambit Declined [D41]

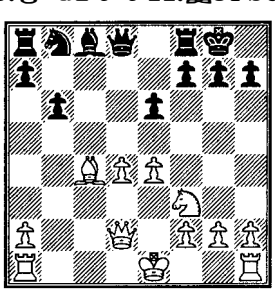
1.c4 ♘f6 2.♘c3 e6 3.♘f3 d5 4.d4 c5 5.c×d5 ♘×d5 6.e4 ♘×c3 7.b×c3 c×d4 8.c×d4 ♗b4+

Black has also tried 8...♘c6 9.♗c4 b5!? 10.♗e2 (10.♗d3?! ♗b4+ 11.♗d2 ♗×d2+ 12.♕×d2 a6 13.a4 0-0 14.♕c3 ♗b7= Spassky-Fischer, Reykjavik 1972) 10...♗b4+ 11.♗d2 ♕a5 12.a4 b×a4 13.♖×a4 += Grivas-Kourkounakis, Corfu 1993.

9.♗d2 ♗×d2+

White obtains a clear advantage after the inaccurate 9...♕a5?! 10.♖b1! ♗×d2+ 11.♕×d2 ♕×d2+ 12.♔×d2.

10.♕×d2 0-0 11.♗c4 b6 (D)



Another option for Black is to develop his b8-knight to c6: 11...♘c6 12.0-0 b6 (12...♕d6 is quite interesting, despite the fact that Black quickly lost the stem game: 13.♖ad1 ♖d8 14.♖fe1 ♗d7 15.d5 e×d5 16.e×d5 ♘e7 17.♘g5 ♗a4 18.♘×f7 ♔×f7 19.♖e6 ♕×e6 20.d×e6+ ♔e8 21.♗d3 ♗×d1 22.♕×d1 ♖ac8 23.h3 ♘d5 24.♕f3 1-0 Browne-Olafsson, Reykjavik 1980) 13.♖ad1! (the best set-up for White is to place his rooks on the e- and d-files, supporting future central advances. 13.♖fd1 ♗b7 14.♕f4 ♖c8 15.d5 e×d5 16.♗×d5 ♕e7 17.♘g5 ♘e5 18.♗×b7 ♘g6 19.♕f5 ♕×b7 20.♖d7 ♕a6 led to an unclear position in Alekhine-Euwe, The Hague 1937) 13...♗b7 14.♖fe1 ♘a5 (14...♖c8?! is inaccurate: 15.d5! e×d5 16.♗×d5 ♘a5 17.♕f4 ♕c7 18.♕f5 ♗×d5 19.e×d5 with advantage for White, Spassky-Petrosian, Moscow 1969) 15.♗d3 ♖c8 16.d5! e×d5 (forced, as 16...♘c4? loses to 17.♗×c4 ♖×c4 18.d×e6 ♕×d2 19.e×f7+ ♖×f7 20.♖×d2 ♖×e4 21.♖×e4 ♗×e4 22.♘g5!, while 16...♕e7 17.♕f4 leads to a clear advantage for White) 17.e5! ♘c4 18.♕f4 ♘b2 (Black must accept the challenge as 18...h6 19.♕f5 g6 20.♕h3 ♔g7 21.e6 would not improve the situation. As was revealed after the game, this position had been carefully studied in advance by Lev Polugaevsky, who now played a typical and well-known sacrifice) 19.♗×h7+! ♔×h7 20.♘g5+ ♔g6 (the only move. White wins after 20...♔g8 21.♕h4 ♖e8 22.♕h7+ ♔f8 23.e6!) 21.h4!! (threatening 22.h5+ ♔×h5 23.g4+ ♔g6 24.♕f5+ ♔h6 25.♕h7+ ♔×g5 26.♕h5+ ♔f4 27.♕f5#) 21...♖c4! (21...♘×d1? is inadequate in light of 22.h5+ ♔h6 23.♘e6+ 1-0 Olafsson-Lombard, Athens 1969, while other moves also do not help Black:

21...♕d7 22.e6!; 21...f5 22.♖d4!; 21...f6 22.h5+ ♔×h5 23.g4+ ♔h6 24.♕h2+) 22.h5+ ♔h6 23.♘×f7+ ♔h7 24.♕f5+ ♔g8 25.e6! (this vital point to justify White's play was part of Lev Polugaevsky's deep preparation) 25...♕f6 (White was threatening both 26.e7 and 26.h6) 26.♕×f6 g×f6 27.♖d2! (27.♘d6?! ♘×d1 28.e7 ♖c1! is unclear) 27...♖c6!? (also interesting is 27...♘a4 28.♘d6, though White of course retains his advantage) 28.♖×b2 ♖e8? (Black's position was highly unpleasant, but he could have set White more problems with 28...♗c8!. White retains a plus with either 29.e7 ♖e8 30.♘d8 or 29.♘h6+ ♔h7 30.♘f5 ♖×e6 31.♖c1) 29.♘h6+! ♔h7 30.♘f5 ♖e×e6 31.♖×e6 ♖×e6 32.♖c2 ♖c6 33.♖e2 ♗c8 (or 33...♖c7 34.♖e6) 34.♖e7+ ♔h8 35.♘h4 f5 36.♘g6+ ♔g8 37.♖×a7 1-0 Polugaevsky-Tal, Moscow 1969.

12.0-0 ♗b7 13.♖fe1 ♘d7

13...♘c6 will transpose to 11...♘c6 notes.

14.♖ad1 ♖c8 15.♗d3

15.♗b3 ♘f6 16.d5 e×d5 17.e×d5 ♖c5 18.d6 is also good, Olafsson-Unzicker, Lugano 1970.

15...♖e8 16.♕e3

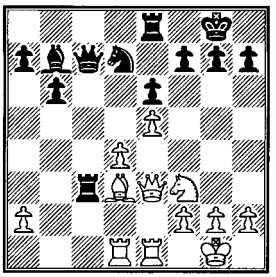
White's other options are:

(a) 16.♗b1 h6 (16...♘f8 17.♖e3 ♕d6 18.♕b2 ♖ed8 ½-½ Prusikin-Levin, Germany 2006) 17.h3 ♕c7 18.♘h2 ♕c3 19.♕f4 ♘f8 20.♖e3∞ Grooten-Horvath, Leeuwarden 1995.

(b) 16.h4 h6 17.♗b5 ♖e7 18.♗×d7 ♖×d7 19.♘e5 ♖dc7 20.♕f4 ♕d6= Mamedyarov-Marcelin, Istanbul 2003.

(c) 16.♕f4 ♕f6 17.♕g3 ♕g6 18.♕f4 ♕f6 19.♕g3 ♕g6 20.♕f4 ♕f6± ½-½ Pedersen-Gyimesi, Germany 2005.

16...♖c3 17.e5 ♕c7 (D)



18.♘g5! ♘f8 19.♘e4 ♗×e4

Forced as otherwise the knight will land on d6-square.

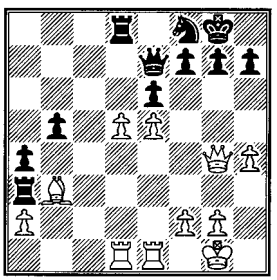
20.♕×e4 ♖d8 21.h4! ♕e7 22.♕g4 ♖a3?!

Black overestimates his chances. He should have played 22...♕a3±.

23.♗c4 b5 24.♗b3! a5

It seems that Black has created sufficient counterplay in the queenside. But "Viktor the Terrible" unleashes a great "positional" combination.

25.d5! a4? (D)



In view of what happened, Black should have tried 25...e×d5 26.♗×d5±. But who can blame Miguel Najdorf for not seeing the future...

26.d×e6! a×b3

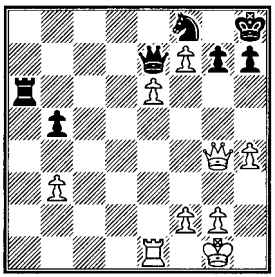
Black had no choice but to accept the sacrifice, as 26...f×e6 27.♖×d8 a×b3 (27...♕×d8 28.♗×e6+) 28.♖×f8+ ♔×f8 29.♖c1 is out of the question.

27.e×f7+ ♔h8

Unfortunately for Black, he cannot continue with 27...♔×f7 28.♖×d8 b×a2 (28...♕×d8 29.e6+ ♔g8 [29...♘×e6

30.♕×e6+ ♔f8 31.♖e5 g6 32.♖d5 ♕e7 33.♕c8+ ♔f7 34.♖d7 b×a2 35.♖×e7+ ♔×e7 36.♕c5+] 30.e7 ♕e8 31.♕b4! ♖a8 32.e×f8♕+ ♕×f8 33.♕×b3+ ♔h8 34.♕×b5+− ♖×a2? 35.♖e8) 29.♖a8! ♖×a8 30.♕f3+ ♔g6 31.♕c6+ ♕e6 32.♕×a8 ♘d7 33.♖e2 ♘×e5 34.♖×a2+−.

28.♖×d8 ♕×d8 29.a×b3 ♕e7 30.e6 ♖a6 (D)



30...♖×b3 31.♖c1 h6 32.♖c8 ♖b1+ 33.♔h2 ♖e1 34.♖e8 ♕d6+ 35.♕g3 is curtains.

Now it seems that Black will get the important e6-pawn and probably the game, but the great Viktor had a different opinion!

31.f4!! h6

After the "obvious" 31...♖×e6 and the forced continuation 32.♖×e6 ♕×e6 (32...♘×e6 33.♕×e6) 33.♕×e6 ♘×e6 34.f5 ♘f8 35.h5! g6 (35...h6 36.g4! g6 37.f6) 36.h6!! g×f5 37.♔f2, White wins as he will capture the black b-pawn with his king, allowing his own b-pawn to queen. In the meantime Black can only play his knight around the f8-square, as his king is locked in a golden cage!

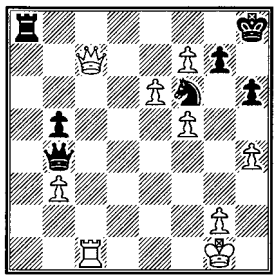
32.f5

Now, White's protected and connected passed pawns will carry the day.

32...♘h7 33.♖c1 ♖a8 34.♕f4 ♘f6 35.♕c7!

Breaking down Black's blockade.

35...♕b4 (D)



36.♕c8+?

White falls into Black's clever, last trap. 36.♕c5 was decisive: 36...♕×c5+ (36...♕e4 37.f8♕+ ♖×f8 38.♕×f8+ ♔h7 39.♕c5) 37.♖×c5 ♖f8 38.♖×b5.

36...♔h7!

Not of course 36...♖×c8? 37.♖×c8+ ♔h7 38.f8♘+!! ♔g8 39.♘g6+ ♔h7 40.♖h8#.

37.♕×a8?!

37.♕c3 ♕×h4 38.♖f1 ♘g4 39.♕h3 ♕×h3 40.g×h3 ♘e5 41.♖c1 g6 42.♖c5 ♘×f7 43.e×f7 ♖f8 44.♖×b5 ♖×f7 45.f×g6+ ♔×g6 also led to a draw, but White should have tried it.

37...♕d4+ 38.♔f1 ♕f4+?

Black blunders in turn. He could have achieved an undeserved draw with the simple 38...♕d3+!.

39.♔e2 ♕e5+ 40.♔d1 1-0

Now White can avoid the perpetual check as his king escapes to the queenside, so Black resigned.

Conclusion

Connected passed pawns on the seventh are a tremendous weapon that can easily compensate for a piece or even more. It is absolutely necessary to clear the path to their promotion, while the defending side should be focused in counterplay against the opponent's king.

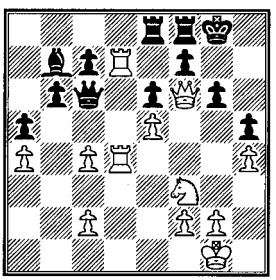
A King's March

Concept

The king is a strong piece (William Steinitz) and can even have an active role in some special middlegame positions, participating in the attack. This motif is of course quite rare in practice, because the attacking side must be extremely careful and watch out that his king will not stumble! But of course when we come across of such examples we can admire the courage of the king that ignores the basic rules that we usually became familiar with in childhood.

(177) Short – Timman
Tilburg 1991
Alekhine's Defense [B04]

1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.♘f3 g6 5.♗c4 ♘b6 6.♗b3 ♗g7 7.♕e2 ♘c6 8.0-0 0-0 9.h3 a5 10.a4 d×e5 11.d×e5 ♘d4 12.♘×d4 ♕×d4 13.♖e1 e6 14.♘d2 ♘d5 15.♘f3 ♕c5 16.♕e4 ♕b4 17.♗c4 ♘b6 18.b3 ♘×c4 19.b×c4 ♖e8 20.♖d1 ♕c5 21.♕h4 b6 22.♗e3 ♕c6 23.♗h6 ♗h8 24.♖d8 ♗b7 25.♖ad1 ♗g7 26.♖8d7 ♖f8 27.♗×g7 ♔×g7 28.♖1d4 ♖ae8 29.♕f6+ ♔g8 30.h4 h5 (D)



Our first example is a well-known one. In the diagrammed position Nigel Short surprised the whole chess world with his beautiful idea.

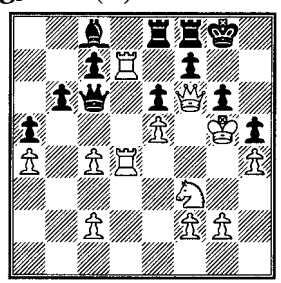
31.♔h2!

White is dominating, but there seems to be no way to improve his pieces' placement, as all of them are in really good squares already. Well, all but one! The king, now entering the battle, heads for the h6-square and helps to mate its black counterpart!

31...♖c8?

Black misses the threat. Although his position is beyond repair, he should try 31...♗c8 when White would have to find a strong continuation starting with 32.g4! h×g4 (32...♗×d7 33.g×h5 g×h5 34.♕g5+ ♔h8 35.♕×h5+ ♔g7 36.♖g4#) 33.♘g5 g3+! (33...♗×d7 34.h5 g3+ 35.f×g3; 33...♗b7 34.f3) 34.♔×g3 (or 34.f×g3 ♗b7 35.♘e4 ♕×a4 36.h5 ♕×c2+ 37.♘f2 g×h5 [37...♕f5 38.h×g6!] 38.♖d3 ♗e4 39.♖d2 ♕b1 40.♖d1 ♕c2 41.♖7d2 ♕×c4 42.♖d4+-) 34...♗×d7 35.♔h2!! +-.

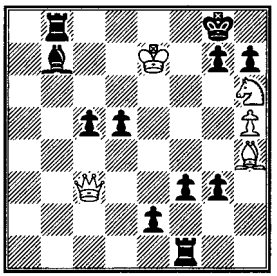
32.♔g3! ♖ce8 33.♔f4! ♗c8 34.♔g5! 1-0 (D)



The white king fulfilled its mission and Black had to resign.

The most "ancient" example we have discovered is nearly 200 years old. It was played in Paris between two legends:

Deschapelles – De Labourdonnais
Paris 1836 (D)



Black is ready to reap the harvest of his efforts by queening his e-pawn, among other things. But again, the attacking position of the white king forces the result.

1.♘×h6+ g×h6

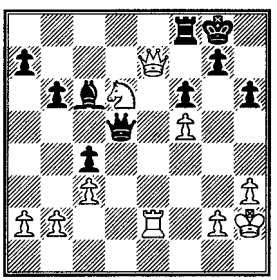
The other option is 1...♔h8 2.♘f7+ ♔g8 3.♕×g7+ ♔×g7 4.♗f6+ ♔g8 5.♘h6#.

2.♕h8+!!

Crowning an excellent combination. A lonely king and a bishop have proven stronger than the rest of Black's army. As is nearly always the case, quality is more important than quantity!

2...♔×h8 3.♔f7 ♖f8+ 4.♔×f8 e1♕ 5.♗f6# 1-0

(178) Teichmann – Consultants
Glasgow 1902 (D)



All White's forces are well-placed and give him the advantage. There is one more piece to come into play and that can only be the king! If it is able to get to g6, mate will follow.

1.♔h2!?

1.♕e6+ ♔h7 2.♕×d5 (2.♘×c4? ♕c5+−+) 2...♗×d5 3.♖d2 ♗g8 4.♔f2 gives White a clear advantage and should be preferred instead, but the text move turns out to be more effective in the game and difficult to "ignore!"

1...b5!

1...h5 does not allow the white king to march, but Black loses with 2.♕e6+! (2.♔g3 ♕d3+ 3.♔h4 b5 4.♔×h5?? ♕g3−+) 2...♔h7 3.♘×c4+−.

2.♔g3?!

White should go on with 2.b3 a6 (2...c×b3 3.a×b3 a5 4.c4 b×c4 5.b×c4 ♕d4 6.♖e3 ♔h7 7.♖g3 ♖g8 8.♕c7±) 3.♕c7 (3.b×c4 b×c4 4.♕e6+ ♔h7 5.♘×c4 ♕c5 6.♘d6 ♖b8!∞/=) 3...♔h7 4.b×c4 b×c4 5.h4±.

2...a5?

Black takes the bait! He should play 2...♕d3+ when nothing is clear cut. An illustrative variation is 3.♖e3 (3.♔h4 ♔h7) 3...♕d2 4.♔h4 ♔h7 5.♖g3 ♖g8 6.♖g6 ♗×g2 7.♘e8 ♕f2+ 8.♖g3 ♕f4±.

3.♔h4!

And the king comes, helping in the mating threats or just getting ready for the endgame!

3...g6

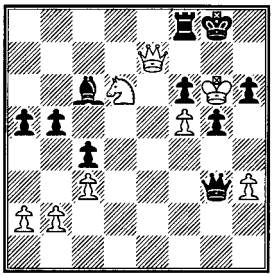
A waiting move as 3...♖a8 allows White to enter a winning endgame with 4.♕e6+! (4.♖e3 is ambitious, but it does not lead to anything after 4...♔h7 5.♖g3 ♖g8 6.♖g6 b4 7.g3 b×c3 8.b×c3 ♕d2 9.♕c7 ♗d5! [9...♕d5? 10.♖×f6+−] 10.♘e8? [10.♘f7 ♗×f7 11.♕×f7 a4 12.a3 ♕c1!=] 10...♕g5+ 11.♖×g5 h×g5+ 12.♔g4 ♖×e8 13.♕d7 ♖e5 14.h4 ♗g2−+ and it is Black who is winning!) 4...♕×e6 5.f×e6 ♖d8 6.♖d2! ♔f8 7.e7+ ♔×e7 8.♘f5+ ♔e8 9.♘×g7+ ♔e7 10.♘f5+ ♔e8 11.♖×d8+ ♔×d8 12.g4+−.

4.♖e3! ♕×g2

The other option was 4...♕c5 5.g4 ♗e4 6.♕e6+ ♔h8 7.♕×e4 ♕×d6 8.f×g6+−.

5.♖g3 ♕f2

5...g5+ 6.♔h5 ♕×g3 7.♔g6 (D)

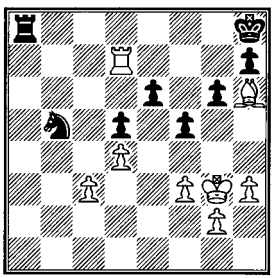


...and the king triumphs!

6.f×g6 ♕f4+ 7.♖g4 ♕f2+ 8.♔h5 1-0

Mate is near. The king has fulfilled its middlegame duties!

(179) Tarrasch – Réti
Vienna 1922 (D)



White's king is active and in contrast to its "ugly" opponent, can enter the battle and cooperate with its pieces.

37.♔g3! ♘×c3 38.♔f4 ♘b5 39.♔e5

Just compare the kings!

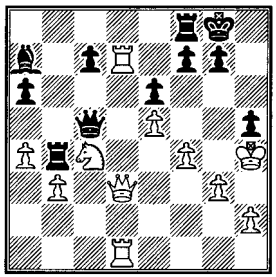
39...♖e8

39...♔g8 40.♖g7+ ♔h8 41.♖b7 ♘a3 42.♔×e6 ♔g8 43.♔×d5 and the d-pawn (among others!) will decide.

40.♔f6 1-0

And Black resigned, as 40...♔g8 41.♖g7+ ♔h8 42.♖b7 ♘d6 43.♖d7 ♘c4 44.♔f7 ♖g8 45.♖d8 ♖×d8 46.♗g7# is nice and effective!

(180) Tibensky – Franzen
Stary Smokovec 1985 (D)

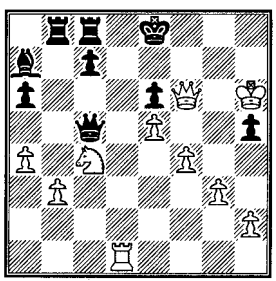


All White's pieces seem to be placed in their best positions. All but one!

27.♔h4! g6 28.♔g5 ♖bb8 29.♔h6 ♖fc8

The main alternative, 29...♕c6, also fails to save Black: 30.♘d2! (30.♕×g6+? f×g6 31.♖g7+ ♔h8 32.♖h7±) 30...♖b4 31.♘f3! ♗c5 (31...♕e4 32.♖×f7! ♕×d3 33.♖g7+ ♔h8 34.♖×d3) 32.♖×f7! ♖×f7 (32...♔×f7 33.♕×g6+ ♔e7 34.♕g5+ ♔f7 35.♕f6+ ♔e8 36.♖d8#) 33.♕×g6+ ♔f8 34.♖d8+ ♕e8 35.♘g5!+−.

30.♖×f7! ♔×f7 31.♕×g6+ ♔e7 32.♕f6+ ♔e8 (D)



33.♘d6+!

Also winning is 33.♕g6+ ♔e7 (33...♔f8 34.♕g7+ ♔e8 35.♘d6+ c×d6 36.e×d6+−) 34.♕g7+ ♔e8 35.♘d6+ c×d6 36.e×d6 ♖c7 37.d×c7+−.

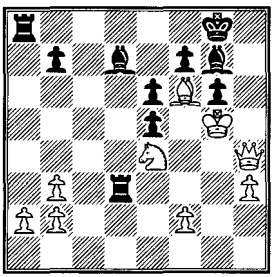
33...c×d6 34.♕×e6+ ♔f8 35.e×d6 ♖b7

There is no salvation any more: 35...♕c3 36.♕e7+ ♔g8 37.♖d3 ♕h8+ 38.♔g6+−.

36.d7 ♖×d7 37.♖×d7 ♕b6 38.♖f7+ ♔g8 39.♖g7+ 1-0

Black resigned as he will be mated in the next move.

(181) Pedzich – Ehrenfeucht
Police 1992 (D)



Materially speaking, Black seems to be doing fine. But the main problem of his position is his king, which is under heavy attack. White can attack it with all his forces, including his king!

29.♔g5! ♖f3

Probably the only try, as 29...♗×f6+ 30.♘×f6+ ♔f8 31.♕h8+ ♔e7 32.♕×a8 loses a lot of material.

30.♗×g7 ♖f5+

30...♔×g7 31.♕h6+ ♔g8 32.♘f6+ ♖×f6 33.♔×f6 leads to mate in the next move.

31.♔h6 f6

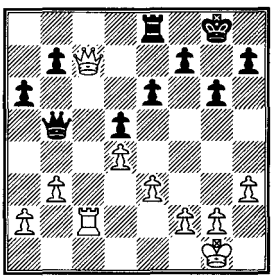
31...♖h5+ 32.♕×h5 g×h5 33.♘f6# is a nice end to a king march!

32.♘×f6+ ♔f7 33.♘×d7?!

Much better was to move again the king with 33.♔h7! ♗c6 34.♘g4 ♖h5+ 35.♘h6+ ♔e8 36.♕f6+−, although the text move is sufficient for the win.

33...♖h5+ 34.♕×h5 g×h5 35.♘×e5+ ♔e7 36.a3 h4 37.♘g6+ ♔f7 38.♘×h4 ♖d8 39.♘f3 ♔e8 40.♘g5 ♖d3 41.b4 ♔e7 42.h4 1-0

(182) Rivas Pastor – Rodriguez
Lorca 2005 (D)

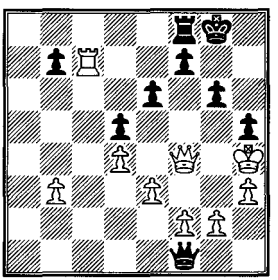


White stands clearly better, as he has full control of the only open file on the board. I am sure that there must be more than one way to win, but in the game White tried the most effective: the participation of his king in a direct attack against its counterpart!

1.♔h2! h5 2.♕f4 ♖f8 3.♖c7 a5 4.♔g3 a4 5.♔h4?

White is in a big hurry! He should first play 5.b×a4 reaching a won ending after 5...♕×a4 6.♖×b7 ♕×a2 7.♔h4 ♕c2 8.♔g5 ♕f5+ 9.♕×f5 e×f5 (9...g×f5 10.♔×h5 ♔g7 11.g4+−) 10.♖b5! (10.♖d7 ♖a8 11.♖×d5 ♖a2) 10...♖d8 11.♔f6 ♖d6+ 12.♔e5 ♖a6 13.♖×d5 ♖a2 14.♔f6 ♖a6+ 15.♔e7 ♖a2 16.♖c5+−.

5...a×b3 6.a×b3 ♕f1? (D)



Black could save himself with 6...♕×b3! 7.♔g5 ♕b1 8.♔h6 ♕f5 9.♕×f5 e×f5 10.♖×b7 ♖d8 11.♖b5 ♔f8.

7.♔g5! h4

Or 7...♕×g2+ 8.♔h6 f6 9.♖g7+ ♔h8 10.♖f7! ♔g8 11.♖×f6 ♖×f6

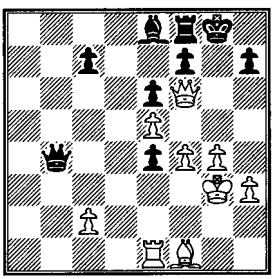
12.♕×f6+– ; 7...♕d3 8.♖×b7 ♕f5+ 9.♕×f5 e×f5 10.b4 ♖c8 11.b5 ♖c2 12.♔f6 ♖×f2 13.♖×f7 f4 14.♖g7+ ♔f8 15.e×f4 ♖×f4+ 16.♔×g6 ♖×d4 17.b6 ♖b4 18.b7+–.

8.♔h6 ♕e2 9.f3 f6 10.♖g7+ ♔h8 11.♕c7 1-0

Black resigned in view of 11...♕×e3+ 12.f4.

The attacking side of course may still have to be wary of danger and make sure the tables are not quickly turned.

(183) Vukovic (D)

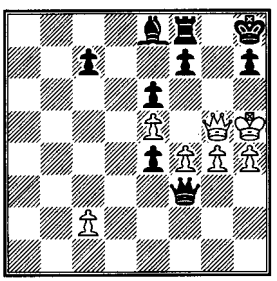


White has a technically won position. Black's weak pawn structure and king should not keep White from scoring the full point.

1.♔h4?

1.♖d1 is the correct follow-up.

1...♕×e1+ 2.♔h5 ♕×f1 3.h4 ♕f3 4.♕g5+ ♔h8 (D)



5.♔h6?

It was time for a perpetual check with 5.♕f6+.

5...♕×g4!

An effective queen sacrifice' Not of course 5...♖g8? 6.♕f6+ ♖g7 7.♕×g7#.

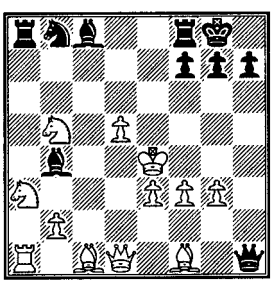
6.♕×g4 ♖g8 7.♕e2 ♖g6+ 8.♔h5 f5! 0-1

And White loses material and the game.

Of course, the king does not always have to be in middle of the battle. There is no point going in for a march with the king without a concrete objective. It will usually end in disaster. Take a look at the next two examples...

(184) Grivas – Drepaniotis
Athens 1982
English Opening [A31]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.♘f3 c5 3.c4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 e5 5.♘b5 d5 6.c×d5 ♗c5 7.♘5c3 0-0 8.a4 a6 9.♘a3 b5 10.a×b5 a×b5 11.♘c×b5 ♘e4 12.e3 ♗b4+ 13.♔e2 ♕h4 14.g3 ♕h5+ 15.f3 ♘×g3+ 16.h×g3 ♕×h1 17.♔d3 e4+ 18.♔×e4 (D)



White's opening "experiments" haven proven disastrous and his king does not seem to have a bright future in the center of the board. Well, White knew that he was lost, so he had nothing to lose; on the other hand Black felt obliged to score the point, which subjected him to some psychological stress.

18...♗a6 19.♖b1 ♕h5 20.♔d4 ♖c8?!

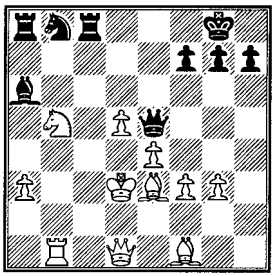
The first inaccuracy. 20...♕g6!

21.e4 (21.♗c4 ♘c6+) 21...♕b6+ 22.♔d3 ♗×a3 was easy and effective.

21.e4 ♗c5+ 22.♔d3 ♕e5?!

22...♘d7 23.b4 ♗f2 is again winning, as the upcoming ...♘e5+ is deadly.

23.♗e3 ♗×a3 24.b×a3 (D)



24...♕c3+?

This is a well-known problem: when everything looks good, you miss the correct way. Black had to play the simple 24...♗×b5+ 25.♖×b5 ♖×a3+ 26.♔e2 ♖a2+ 27.♗d2 ♖cc2 which would have been enough for White to resign.

25.♔e2 ♗×b5+

25...♕×a3 26.♔f2 and White is doing fine.

26.♖×b5 ♖×a3 27.♕d2 ♕a1?

The ending after 27...♕×d2+? 28.♗×d2 ♘d7 29.♗h3 ♖a7 30.f4 is pleasant for White but Black should have kept the queens on board with 27...♕f6.

28.♗d4! ♕a2 29.♕×a2 ♖×a2+ 30.♔e3 ♖a3+ 31.♗d3

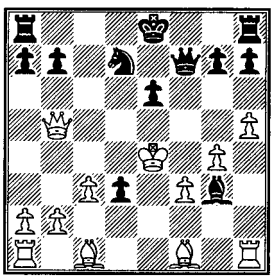
Suddenly it is White who holds the advantage!

31...f6 32.♖b7 +/- ♘a6? 33.♖a7 1-0

This is an example of how "not to play" in the opening! Do not bring your king out into the battle too early; you will not always be as lucky as White was in this game!

(185) Karpov – Zaitsev,A.
Kuibyshev 1970
Caro-Kann Defense [B17]

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 d×e4 4.♘×e4 ♘d7 5.♘f3 ♘gf6 6.♘×f6+ ♘×f6 7.♘e5 ♗f5 8.c3 e6 9.g4 ♗g6 10.h4 ♗d6 11.♕e2 c5 12.h5 ♗e4 13.f3 c×d4 14.♕b5+ ♘d7 15.♘×f7 ♗g3+ 16.♔e2 d3+ 17.♔e3 ♕f6 18.♔×e4 ♕×f7 (D)



White did not handle the opening with accuracy and as a result his king was "forced" to take up an unpleasant central position in the middlegame!

19.♖h3

White's weakest point, f3, must be defended.

19...a6 20.♕g5 h6?

A critical mistake, throwing the win away. Black could force a clearly better (if not winning) position with 20...e5! 21.♖×g3 ♘c5+ 22.♔e3 0-0 23.♗×d3 (23.♖h3? ♖ad8 24.♗d2 ♘e4! 25.♔×e4 [25.f×e4 ♕f2#] 25...♕d5+ 26.♔e3 ♕c5+ 27.♔e4 ♖d4+ 28.♔e3 ♖×g4+ 29.♔×d3 ♖×g5 30.♗×g5 e4+ 31.f×e4 ♕×g5−+) 23...♕f4+ 24.♕×f4 e×f4+ 25.♔d4 ♘×d3 (25...f×g3 26.♔×c5 g2 27.♗c4+ ♔h8 28.♗g5) 26.♖g2 ♖ad8+ 27.♔c4 ♘e5+ 28.♔b3 ♖d1∓.

21.♕e3!

The only move, as the alternative 21.♕g6? loses as follows: 21...♘c5+ 22.♔e3 (22.♔d4? 0-0-0+! 23.♔×c5 [23.♔c4 ♕d7 24.a4 ♕d5+ 25.♔b4 ♕b3+ 26.♔×c5 ♖d5#] 23...♕c7+

24.♔b4 ♖d4+ 25.c×d4 ♗d6+ 26.♔a4 ♕c4+ 27.b4 ♕×b4#) 22...♗f4+ 23.♔f2 ♕×g6 24.h×g6 d2 25.♗×d2 ♗×d2−+.

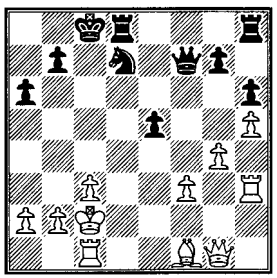
21...e5?!

Black should force a draw with 21...♘f6+ 22.♔×d3 ♘×g4 23.f×g4 ♕×f1+ 24.♔c2 ♕×h3 25.♕×e6+ ♔d8 26.♕d5+ ♔c8 27.♕f5+ ♔b8 28.♗f4+ ♗×f4 29.♕×f4+ ♔c8 30.♕c4+. He did not understand that he could not play for a win anymore, and as a result he was punished!

22.♔×d3! ♗f4 23.♕g1!

The white queen must keep an eye to the d7-knight and its "entry" square, c5.

23...0-0-0 24.♔c2 ♗×c1 25.♖×c1! (D)



White returns the pawn, but he completes the mobilization of all his pieces. The weaknesses in Black's position, the pawn structure and worse minor piece, will soon begin to weigh heavily. From this point the game does not have a real connection to our subject. The end was an impressive piece of technique:

25...♕×a2 26.♖h2 ♖hf8 27.♖d2 ♕a4+ 28.♔b1 += ♕c6 29.♗d3 ♔c7 30.♗e4 ♕b6 31.♕h2 ♖de8 32.♖cd1 ♘f6 33.♗g6 ♖e7 34.♖e1 ♕b5 35.♖de2 ♘d7 36.♗f5! +/- ♖×f5 37.g×f5 ♕d3+ 38.♔a1 ♕×f5 39.♕h4 ♘f6 40.♕c4+ ♔d8 41.♕c5 ♘d7 42.♕d5 ♔c8 43.♖e4 b5 44.♕a8+ ♔c7 45.♕a7+ ♔d8 46.♕×a6 ♕×h5 47.f4 ♕f5 48.♕a8+ ♔c7 49.♕a5+ ♔c6 50.c4 b4 51.♕×b4 ♖e6 52.f×e5 ♔c7 53.♕a5+ ♔b7 54.♕b5+ ♖b6 55.♕d5+ ♔c7 56.♔b1 ♕f2 57.♖4e2 ♕f5+ 58.♕e4 ♕×e4+ 59.♖×e4 ♘c5 60.♖4e3 ♘e6 61.♔c2 g5 62.♔c3 h5 63.b4 ♖a6 64.c5 ♖a3+ 65.♔c4 ♖×e3 66.♖×e3 h4 67.b5 ♔d8 68.b6 ♔d7 69.♖d3+ ♔c8 70.♖d6 h3 71.♖×e6 g4 72.♖h6 1-0

Conclusion

A king's march can be shown to be decisive in positions in which we are in full control and our opponent is lacking effective counterplay. As it is our "only" badly placed piece it is logical to think of ways to improve it, as it can easily deliver the decisive blow. But of course we should be very careful with such action...

Pawn Endings

Concept

Pawn endings are fundamental to the education of an aspiring chessplayer. The reason is obvious: no matter what kind of ending we encounter, there will always be moments when the possibility of a transition (through exchanges) to a pawn ending will force us to properly evaluate its positive or negative properties and accordingly make our decision.

Many games never reach the endgame. However, every good chessplayer, even in the heat of the battle, must consider the endings that can possibly arise in the course of the game. Our opening moves must take into account the consequences they may impose on a future ending. Doubled,

isolated, immobilized or passed pawns, strong and weak squares – in general, all the positional elements, positive or negative – must be considered and evaluated. Anticipation of a favorable ending or fear of an inferior one will often influence our decisions in the middlegame, in the sense of selecting or rejecting certain continuations. When dissatisfied with a prospective ending we will often opt for unclear complications or serious material or positional concessions. In the end, our evaluation of the endings that may arise will affect the entire course of the battle.

In comparison with other types of endings, very few games actually reach a pawn ending. Based on this fact, many chessplayers tend to underestimate its rich content and significance. It would be wrong to assume that perfect knowledge of its technical side is easy to master and that, consequently, its study is unimportant. A pawn ending lurks behind every position and proper knowledge and evaluation can prove very useful to our decision-making process.

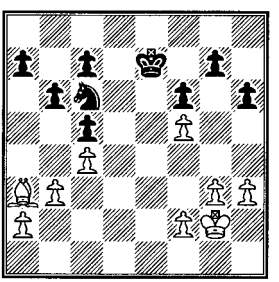
Pawn endings have their own specifics that set them apart from other types of endings. Their main characteristic is the significant role of the king, which transforms itself from a subject of protection by the other pieces to the most useful piece in combat. As a rule, the active participation of the king in the proceedings decides the outcome of a pawn ending. Also, the value of pawns is greatly increased, thanks to their unique ability to promote to any other piece.

Consequently, the basic aim in a pawn ending is to create a passed pawn and promote it. The transformation of the pawn can be considered as an original way of gaining material! Such a drastic change in the material balance between the opponents is usually sufficient to cease further resistance. The threat of promotion, or even that of creating a passed pawn, is a powerful weapon in itself.

In pawn endings, the king is the main motivating power, guiding and coordinating the advance of the pawns. As a rule, the king heads for the center, from where, according to needs, it may be directed to either flank, usually to attack enemy pawns. The king also executes complex maneuvers, aiming to occupy or defend critical squares, or to force the opponent to move, i.e., to create a position of *zugzwang*. Behind the veil of simplicity that covers pawn endings, quite often one can discover true gems and fantastic opportunities!

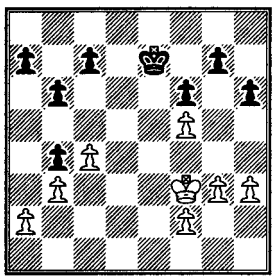
(186) Krasenkow – Gelfand
Polanica Zdroj 1997
English Opening [A28]

1.c4 e5 2.♘c3 ♘f6 3.♘f3 ♘c6 4.d4 e×d4 5.♘×d4 ♗b4 6.g3 ♘e5 7.♕b3 ♗c5 8.♗e3 d6 9.♘a4 0-0 10.♘×c5 d×c5 11.♘f3 ♘×f3+ 12.e×f3 b6 13.♗g2 ♗b7 14.0-0 ♕d6 15.♖ad1 ♕c6 16.♕d3 ♖fe8 17.♖fe1 h6 18.h3 ♘h7 19.b3 ♘f8 20.♔h2 ♘g6 21.♕c3 ♖ad8 22.♖×d8 ♖×d8 23.♗c1 f6 24.♗h1 24...♕d6 25.f4 ♗×h1 26.♔×h1 ♘e7 27.♕f3 ♕c6 28.♔g2 ♔f8 29.♕×c6 ♘×c6 30.f5 ♘b4 31.♖e2 ♖e8 32.♖d2 ♖e1 33.♗a3 ♘c6 34.♖d7 ♖e7 35.♖×e7 ♔×e7 ½-½ (D)

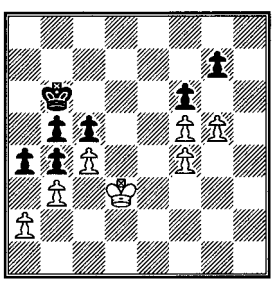


Here Black offered a draw which was immediately accepted by White.

But there is a problem in this decision, as he seems to be winning: 36.♔f3 (36.♗b2 doesn't help: 36...♘b4 37.a3 ♘c6 [with the threat ...♘a5] 38.♗c3 ♘d4 39.♗×d4 c×d4 40.♔f3 ♔d6 41.♔e4 c5 [planning ...♔c6 and ...b5] 42.b4 a6 and ...b5, wins) 36...♘b4! 37.♗×b4 c×b4 (D)



Now Black's plan is ...♔d6-c5 and ...a6, ...b5, winning. It is true that both sides have doubled pawns, which don't seem to help either, but the big difference is the white pawn on c4 – if it were on c2 the draw would be assured. Black can create an assault on c4 and eventually un-double his queenside pawns. So, 38.♔e4 (the alternative is 38.♔g4 a6 39.f4 c5 40.♔f3 b5 41.♔e4 ♔d6 [Black must avoid an early exchange: 41...b×c4? 42.b×c4 a5 43.♔d3 a4 as here White can achieve a draw with 44.a3!=] 42.♔d3 ♔c6 which transposes: 43.♔c2 ♔b6 44.♔b2 a5 [44...b×c4? 45.b×c4 a5 46.a4=] 45.a3 a4!−+) 38...♔d6 39.♔d4 (if 39.f4, then 39...♔c5 [39...c5 also wins: 40.♔d3 a6 41.♔c2 b5 42.♔b2 ♔c6 43.a4 (43.a3 b×a3+ [43...♔b6 44.♔a2 ♔a5 (44...a5 45.a4=) 45.♔b2 b×c4 46.b×c4 ♔a4−+] 44.♔×a3 ♔b6 45.g4 ♔a5 46.h4 ♔b6 47.h5 ♔a5 48.g5 ♔b6 49.♔b2 a5 50.g6=) 43...♔b6 44.♔c2 ♔a5 45.a×b5 a×b5 46.♔d3 h5! (46...b×c4+? 47.♔×c4 ♔b6 48.♔d5 ♔b5 49.g4 ♔b6 50.♔d6=) 47.g4 h4 48.g5 ♔b6 49.♔c2 and now the triangulation decides: 49...♔a6! 50.c×b5+ (50.♔d3 ♔a5 51.g6 ♔b6 52.♔c2 ♔a6 53.♔d3 ♔a5 54.c×b5 ♔×b5−+) 50...♔×b5 51.♔d3 c4+! 52.b×c4+ ♔c5 53.g6 b3 54.♔c3 b2 55.♔×b2 ♔×c4−+] 40.g4 a6 41.h4 b5 42.c×b5 a×b5 43.g5 ♔d6 44.♔d4 c5+ 45.♔e4 ♔c6 46.h5 ♔d6 47.♔e3 ♔d5 48.♔d3 c4+ 49.♔e3 c3 50.g6 c2 51.♔d2 ♔e4 52.♔×c2 ♔×f4 53.♔d3 ♔×f5−+) 39...c5+ 40.♔e4 a6 41.f4 b5 42.♔d3 h5 (also good is 42...♔c6 43.♔c2 a5 44.♔b2 a4! 45.a3 [45.♔c2 b×c4 46.b×c4 a3! 47.♔c1 ♔b6 48.♔c2 ♔a6! 49.♔d3 ♔a5 50.♔d2 ♔a4 51.♔c2 b3+ 52.a×b3+ ♔b4−+] 45...b×a3+ 46.♔×a3 a×b3 47.♔×b3 h5−+) 43.g4 h×g4 44.h×g4 ♔c6 45.♔c2 a5 46.♔d3 ♔b6 47.g5 a4 (D)

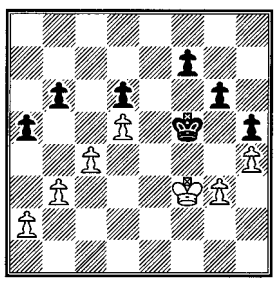


48.♔c2 (48.g6 a×b3 49.a×b3 b×c4+ 50.♔×c4 [50.b×c4 ♔a5 51.♔c2 ♔a4−+] 50...♔c6−+) 48...b×c4 49.b×c4 a3! 50.♔b3 ♔a5 51.g6 ♔b6 52.♔c2 and now 52...♔a6! decides.

The next example is very complicated and I would consider it as a one-game lesson. Yes, pawn endings can be really complicated, but very good work-laboratories for a chessplayer's education!

(187) Muzychuk – Ju
Ningbo 2009
Sicilian Defense [B90]

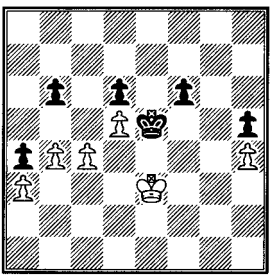
1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e3 e5 7.♘de2 ♗e7 8.♘g3 ♗e6 9.♗e2 0-0 10.0-0 ♘bd7 11.♘d5 ♗×d5 12.e×d5 ♘e8 13.♘f5 ♗g5 14.f4 e×f4 15.♗×f4 g6 16.♘e3 ♘g7 17.♗×g5 ♕×g5 18.♘c4 ♘b6 19.♘×b6 ♕e3+ 20.♔h1 ♕×b6 21.b3 ♘f5 22.♕d2 ♘e3 23.♖fe1 ♖ae8 24.c4 ♖e5 25.♗f3 ♖fe8 26.♖ac1 ♕d8 27.♖e2 ♘f5 28.♖ce1 ♖×e2 29.♖×e2 ♖×e2 30.♗×e2 ♕f6 31.♔g1 ♕e5 32.g3 a5 33.♗f3 b6 34.♔g2 h5 35.♕e2 ♕d4 36.h4 ♔g7 37.♕f2 ♕e5 38.♔h3 ♘e3 39.♕e2 ♔f6 40.♔h2 ♘f5 41.♕f2 ♕e3 42.♕b2+ ♘d4 43.♗d1 ♔e7 44.♔g2 ♘f5 45.♕f2 ♔f6 46.♗c2 ♔e5 47.♗×f5 ♕×f2+ 48.♔×f2 ♔×f5 49.♔f3 (D)



49...♔e5?

Black should have gone in for the plan with ...g5 while the white king was on f3. Why? You'll see soon! Correct move order was 49...f6! and now:

(a) 50.a3? g5! 51.b4 (51.h×g5 f×g5 52.g4+ h×g4+ 53.♔g3 ♔e4 54.♔×g4 ♔d4 55.♔×g5 [55.a4 ♔c3 56.♔×g5 ♔×b3−+] 55...a4! [55...♔c3? 56.♔f5 ♔×b3 57.♔e6=] 56.b×a4 ♔×c4−+) 51...g×h4 52.g×h4 a4 (Black also wins after 52...♔e5 53.♔e3 f5 54.b×a5 b×a5 55.a4 f4+ 56.♔d3 f3 57.♔e3 f2 58.♔×f2 ♔d4 59.♔f3 ♔×c4 60.♔f4 ♔×d5 61.♔g5 ♔e4 62.♔×h5 ♔f5! [62...d5? 63.♔g6 d4 64.h5 d3 65.h6 d2 66.h7 d1♕ 67.h8♕ ♕g4+ 68.♔f6!=] 63.♔h6 d5 64.h5 d4 65.♔g7 d3 66.h6 d2 67.h7 d1♕ 68.h8♕ ♕d7+ 69.♔f8 ♕d8+ 70.♔g7 ♕e7+ 71.♔g8 ♔g6!−+ but not with 52...a×b4? 53.a×b4 ♔e5 54.♔e3 f5 55.b5! f4+ 56.♔f3 ♔d4 57.♔×f4 ♔×c4 58.♔g5 ♔×b5 59.♔×h5 ♔c5 60.♔g6 b5=) 53.♔e3 ♔e5 (D)



54.♔d3 f5 55.♔e3 f4+ 56.♔d3 f3 57.♔e3 f2 58.♔×f2 ♔d4 59.♔f3 ♔×c4 60.♔f4 ♔b3 61.♔f5 ♔×a3 62.♔e6 ♔×b4 63.♔×d6 a3−+.

(b) 50.a4? g5 51.h×g5 f×g5 52.g4+ h×g4+ 53.♔g3 ♔f6 54.♔×g4 ♔g6−+.

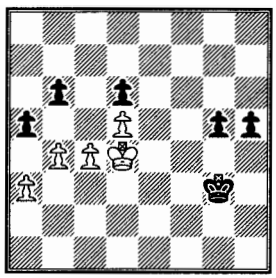
(c) 50.♔e3! Best. White's alternatives are easy to handle as it was shown. Now Black again is on crossroads:

(c1) 50...♔g4?! 51.a3 (51.♔f2? g5 52.a3 [52.h×g5 f×g5 53.a3 ♔f5−+] 52...g×h4 53.g×h4 ♔f4−+) 51...♔×g3 52.b4 a×b4 53.a×b4 f5 54.♔e2! ♔g2 55.♔e3=.

(c2) 50...♔e5?! 51.a3 b5! 52.c×b5 ♔×d5 53.a4 (53.b4 a×b4 54.a×b4 ♔e6 55.b6 [55.♔d4 g5; 55.♔e4 ♔d7 56.b6 ♔c6 57.b7 ♔×b7 58.♔d5 ♔c7 59.♔e6 g5 60.♔×f6 g×h4 61.g×h4 d5 62.♔g5 (62.♔e5 ♔c6 63.♔d4 ♔b5=) 62...d4 63.♔f4 ♔c6 64.♔e4 ♔b5 65.♔×d4 ♔×b4=] 55...♔d7 56.b5 ♔c8 57.♔e4 ♔b7 58.♔d5 ♔×b6 59.♔×d6 ♔×b5 60.♔e6 g5 61.♔×f6 g×h4 62.g×h4 ♔c5=) 53...♔c5 54.♔f4 (54.♔e4 d5+ 55.♔f4 ♔d6 56.♔e3 g5 57.♔d4 [57.g4? d4+!−+] 57...g×h4 58.g×h4 f5=; 54.♔e2 d5 55.♔f2 [55.♔e3? g5

56.g4 d4+ 57.♔f2 h×g4 58.h5 d3 59.h6 g3+ 60.♔×g3 d2−+] 55...d4 [55...g5 56.g4 h×g4 57.h5 d4 58.b6 ♔×b6 59.h6 d3 60.h7 g3+ 61.♔×g3 d2 62.h8♕ d1♕ 63.♕×f6+=] 56.♔e2 g5 57.♔d2! [57.♔d3? g4! 58.b6 ♔×b6 59.♔×d4 ♔c6 60.♔e4 ♔c5 61.♔f5 ♔d4! 62.♔g6 ♔e4 63.♔×h5 f5 64.♔g6 f4 65.h5 f×g3 66.h6 g2 67.h7 g1♕ 68.h8♕ ♕b6+ −+] 57...g4 58.♔d3 f5 59.b6=) 54...d5 55.g4 h×g4 56.♔×g4 f5+ 57.♔f4 d4 58.♔f3 ♔d5 59.♔f4 ♔d6 60.♔f3 ♔e5 61.♔e2 f4 62.♔e1! ♔d5 63.♔e2=.

(c3) 50...g5 51.♔d4!! is the point: 51...♔g4 52.a3 ♔×g3 (52...g×h4 53.g×h4 f5 54.b4 a×b4 55.a×b4 f4 56.c5 b×c5+ 57.b×c5 d×c5+ 58.♔×c5 f3 59.d6 f2 60.d7 f1♕ 61.d8♕=) 53.h×g5 f×g5 54.b4 (D)



And again, here Black can choose from several different queen endings:

(c31) 54...h4 55.b×a5 b×a5 56.c5 d×c5+ 57.♔×c5 h3 58.d6 h2 59.d7 h1♕ 60.d8♕ ♕c1+ 61.♔b5 g4 62.♔×a5 ♕×a3+ 63.♔b5=.

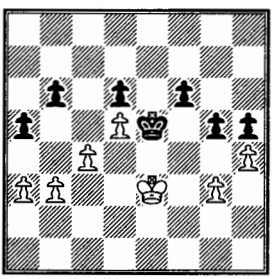
(c32) 54...a×b4 55.a×b4 g4 (55...h4 56.c5 b×c5+ 57.b×c5 d×c5+ 58.♔×c5 h3 59.d6 h2 60.d7 h1♕ 61.d8♕ ♕c1+ 62.♔b5 g4=) 56.c5 b×c5+ 57.b×c5 d×c5+ 58.♔×c5 ♔h3 59.d6 g3 60.d7 g2 61.d8♕ g1♕+ 62.♔b5=.

(c33) 54...g4 55.c5 b×c5+ 56.b×c5 d×c5+ 57.♔×c5 ♔f4 (57...♔h3 58.d6 g3 59.d7 g2 60.d8♕ g1♕+ 61.♔b5=) 58.d6 g3 59.d7 g2 60.d8♕ g1♕+ 61.♔c6 ♕g6+ 62.♔b7 ♕e4+ 63.♔b6 ♕e5=. Here Black has kept an extra pawn outside the ambit of current databases with appreciable winning chances since if 64.♕h4, 64... ♔e3! threatening ...♕d4+ and so preventing 65.a4.

50.♔e3 f6

Transposing to the analysis, which is fine for White. The attempt to "reset" the position with 50...♔f5 fails to 51.a3! ♔e5 (51...♔g4? 52.b4 a×b4 53.a×b4 ♔f5 [53...f5? 54.♔f2 +−] 54.♔d4 +−) 52.♔d3 f6 53.♔e3 where it is just a transposition.

51.a3 g5? (D)



51...b5! as analyzed above leads to a draw and of course 51...♔f5? also loses: 52.♔d4 ♔g4 53.b4 a×b4 54.a×b4 ♔×g3 55.c5 b×c5+ 56.b×c5 d×c5+ 57.♔×c5 f5 58.d6+−.

52.g4!

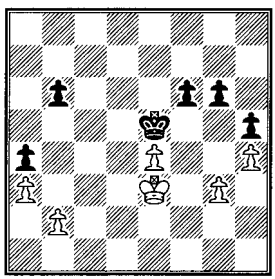
This is the point – White gets her own passed pawn. Note that with the white king on f3 she would not have had this idea.

52...h×g4 53.h5 f5 54.h6 f4+ 55.♔f2 ♔f6 56.b4 a×b4 57.a×b4 ♔g6 58.c5! b×c5 59.b×c5 d×c5 60.d6 1-0

The previous example reminded me of a very similar one that I had come across:

(188) Ree – Ftacnik
Kiev 1978
Grünfeld Defense [D99]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♘f3 ♗g7 5.♕b3 d×c4 6.♕×c4 0-0 7.e4 ♗g4 8.♗e3 ♘fd7 9.♕b3 ♘b6 10.♖d1 e6 11.♗e2 ♘c6 12.e5 ♘e7 13.0-0 ♗×f3 14.♗×f3 ♘f5 15.♘e4 ♘×e3 16.f×e3 ♘d5 17.♘c5 b6 18.♗×d5 e×d5 19.♘a6 ♖c8 20.♘b4 c5 21.d×c5 ♗×e5 22.♘×d5 ♕h4 23.♘f4 ♖×c5 24.♖d7 ♖c7 25.g3 ♕g4 26.♖×c7 ♗×c7 27.♘d5 ♗e5 28.♘f6+ ♗×f6 29.♖×f6 ♕d7 30.♖f2 ♖e8 31.h3 ♖e5 32.♔g2 ♖h5 33.h4 ♖b5 34.♕c4 ♖c5 35.♕e4 ♖c1 36.♕a8+ ♖c8 37.♕f3 ♖e8 38.a3 ♖e5 39.♖c2 ♔g7 40.♕f4 ♕d5+ 41.♕f3 ♕d3 42.♖c3 ♕b1 43.♕e2 a5 44.♔h2 ♖f5 45.♖c2 ♖f1 46.♕g2 ♕e1 47.e4 ♕d1 48.♖e2 h5 49.♖d2 ♖h1+ 50.♕×h1 ♕×d2+ 51.♕g2 ♕×g2+ 52.♔×g2 ♔f6 53.♔f3 ♔e5 54.♔e3 a4 55.♔d3 f6 56.♔e3 (D)



Although it looks like Black holds the advantage because of his better placed king and the weaker white pawn structure, there is not much that he can do.

56...g5?

There is no way for Black to prove his "advantage": 56...b5 57.♔f3 g5 58.♔e3= or 56...♔e6 57.♔f2 ♔d6 (57...g5? 58.g4 h×g4 59.h5) 58.♔e2= or, finally, 56...♔d6 57.♔f3 ♔e6 58.♔f2=. But the text move loses, as it loses nearly every time that the white king is not on f3 – in that case ...h×g4 would be check!

57.g4! h×g4

57...g×h4 also loses: 58.g×h5 h3 (58...f5 59.h6!) 59.♔f2+-.

58.h5! ♔e6

58...f5 59.h6! f4+ 60.♔d3 ♔f6 61.e5+ +-

59.♔f2!

Now White goes to regain his pawn.

59...♔f7 60.♔g3 ♔g7 61.♔×g4 ♔h6 62.♔f5! ♔×h5

Black has nothing to hope anymore. 62...b5 63.♔g4! ♔g7 64.e5+- wins in view of White's outside pawn.

63.♔×f6 g4 64.e5 g3 65.e6 g2 66.e7 g1♕ 67.e8♕+

And the ending is won for White!

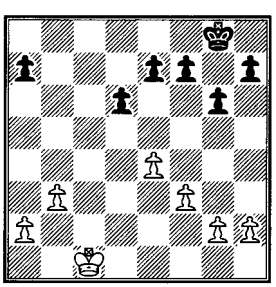
67...♔h4 68.♕h8+

68.♕×a4+ ♔g3 69.♕b5 was good enough, as the white king will go to c6, collecting Black's last pawn. But of course, a pawn ending is the safest way to finish the job!

68...♔g3 69.♕g7+ ♔f2 70.♕×g1+ ♔×g1 71.♔e5 ♔f2 72.♔d5 ♔e3 73.♔c6 ♔d2 74.♔×b6 ♔c2 75.♔a5 ♔×b2 76.♔×a4 ♔c3 1-0

And to conclude here is a notorious ending which I have first analyzed in my book *Practical Endgame Play* (Everyman 2008, updated with some recent games):

(189) (D)



After a well-known opening variation of the Dragon Sicilian [B77] – **1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 g6 6.♗c4 ♗g7 7.♗b3 0-0 8.f3 ♘c6 9.♗e3 ♘×d4 10.♗×d4 ♕a5 11.♕d2 ♗e6 12.0-0-0 b5 13.♔b1 ♖fc8 14.♖he1 ♗×b3 15.c×b3 b4 16.♘d5 ♘×d5 17.♗×g7 ♘c3+ 18.♗×c3 b×c3 19.b×c3 ♖×c3 20.♖e3 ♖ac8 21.♖×c3 ♕×c3 22.♕×c3 ♖×c3 23.♔b2 ♖c7 24.♖c1 ♖×c1 25.♔×c1** – an interesting ending arises. Both sides have played on principle: White believes that he can take advantage of his queenside pawn-majority and Black thinks that he can hold the draw. Well, Black is more correct in his thoughts, and let's see why.

25...♔f8

25...g5? to prevent the coming 29.h4 does not work: 26.♔b2 ♔f8 27.♔a3 ♔e8 28.♔a4 ♔d7 29.♔a5 ♔c7 30.♔a6 ♔b8 (30...e6 31.b4 transposes [31.♔×a7 d5 32.e×d5 e×d5 33.b4 d4 34.b5 d3 35.b6+ ♔d7 36.b7 d2 37.b8♕ d1♕ 38.♕b5+ ♔c7 39.♕c4+ ♔d6 40.♕×f7 ±]) 31.b4 e6 32.a4! (32.b5? d5 33.e×d5 e×d5 34.♔a5 ♔c7 35.♔b4 d4 36.a4 d3 37.♔c3 ♔b6=) 32...♔a8 33.b5 h6 (33...♔b8 34.b6; 33...d5 34.e×d5 e×d5 35.♔a5) 34.g3 h5 35.f4 g×f4 36.g×f4 h4 37.f5 h3 38.f6+–.

26.♔d2

In a recent game White overdid it: 26.b4 ♔e8 27.b5 ♔d7 28.a4 d5 29.e5 a6 30.b×a6 ♔c7 31.f4 ♔b6 32.g4 ♔×a6 33.♔c2 ♔a5 34.♔b3 h6 35.h4 h5 36.f5? (36.g×h5 g×h5 37.♔a3=) 36...e6 37.f×g6 (37.g×h5 g×h5 38.f6 d4–+) 37...f×g6 38.g×h5 g×h5 39.♔a3 d4 40.♔b3 d3 41.♔c3 ♔×a4 42.♔×d3 ♔b4 43.♔e4 ♔c4 44.♔f4 ♔d4 45.♔g5 ♔×e5 46.♔×h5 ♔f5 47.♔h6 e5 48.h5 e4 49.♔g7 e3 50.h6 e2 51.h7 e1♕ 52.h8♕ ♕e7+ 0-1 Stoinev-Tsvetkov, Pleven 2006.

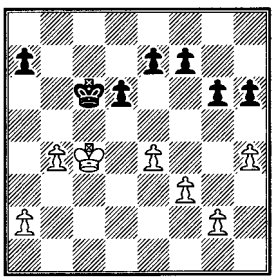
26...♔e8 27.♔c3 ♔d7 28.♔c4 ♔c6 29.h4

The only troublesome method. White should not to allow Black to play ...g5, as then Black's defenses would be easier. 29.b4? g5! is fine for Black.

29...h6

29...h5? is an awful move: 30.b4 e6 31.g4 f6 (31...♔b6 32.a4 ♔c6 33.g×h5 g×h5 34.♔d4 ♔b6 35.f4 ♔c6 36.f5 ♔b6 37.♔e3 ♔c6 38.♔f4 d5 39.♔e5+–) 32.g×h5 g×h5 33.f4 ♔d7 34.a4 ♔c6 35.f5+–. Black should be very careful with pawn moves, as pawns cannot return back!

30.b4 (D)

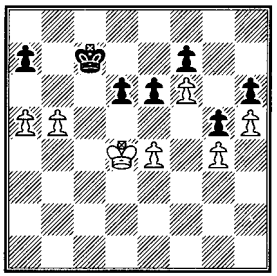


30...a6!

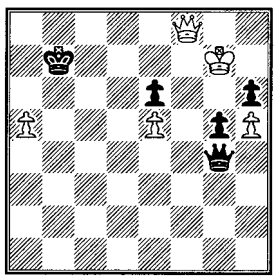
Black cannot really do without this move. If he keeps his a-pawn on a7, then White pushes his pawns on a5 and b5 and then he will penetrate via the c5-square, as can be seen: 30...e6? 31.a4 ♔b6 32.f4! ♔c6 (32...h5 33.f5 and 32...f5 33.h5 g×h5 34.e×f5 e×f5 35.♔d5 are both hopeless) 33.g4 ♔b6 34.f5 and now:

(a) 34...g5 35.a5+ ♔c6 36.b5+ ♔b7 37.h5 ♔c7 38.♔d4 ♔d7 39.f6 ♔c7 (D)

40.e5! d5 (40...d×e5+ 41.♔×e5 ♔d7 42.♔d4 ♔d6 43.♔c4 e5 44.a6+–) 41.♔c5 ♔d7 (41...♔b7 42.♔d6 d4 43.♔e7 d3 44.♔×f7 d2 45.♔g8 d1♕



46.f7 +–) 42.b6 a×b6+ 43.♔×b6 (43.a×b6? d4!=) 43...♔c8 (43...d4 44.a6 d3 45.a7 d2 46.a8♕ d1♕ 47.♕a7+ ♔d8 48.♕e7+ ♔c8 49.♕c7#) 44.♔c5 ♔b7 45.♔d6 d4 46.♔e7 d3 47.♔×f7 d2 48.♔g7 d1♕ 49.f7 ♕×g4 50.f8♕ (D)



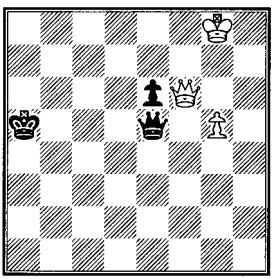
and now:

(a1) 50...♕×h5 51.♕e7+ ♔a8 (51...♔a6 52.♕b4 ♔a7 53.♕b6+ ♔a8 54.♕c6+ ♔b8 55.a6 +–) 52.♕d8+ ♔b7 53.♕b6+ ♔c8 54.♕×e6+ +– .

(a2) 50...♕c4 51.♔×h6 ♕f4 (51...g4 52.♔g5 g3 53.♕f3+ ♕d5 54.♕×g3 ♕×a5 55.♕b3+ +–) 52.♕e7+ ♔a6 53.♕×e6+ ♔×a5 54.♕f6+-.

(a3) 50...♕e4 51.♕e7+ ♔a8 (51...♔a6 52.♕c5 ♕b7+ 53.♔×h6 g4 54.♕c4+ ♔×a5 55.♕a2+ ♔b5 56.♕b3+ ♔c6 57.♕×e6+ ♔c5 58.♕×g4 +–) 52.♕×e6 g4 53.♕a6+ ♔b8 54.♕d6+ ♔a7 55.e6 g3 56.♕×g3 ♕×e6 57.♕c7+ ♔a8 58.♕d8+ ♔b7 59.♕b6+ +– .

(b) 34...♔c6 35.b5+ ♔b6 36.♔b4 ♔c7 37.a5 ♔b7 38.f6 ♔c7 39.g5 h×g5 40.h×g5 ♔b7 41.♔c4 ♔c7 42.♔d4 ♔c8 (42...♔b7 43.e5! d5 [43...d×e5+ 44.♔×e5 ♔c7 45.b6+ a×b6 46.a×b6+ ♔×b6 47.♔d6 e5 48.♔e7 e4 49.♔×f7 e3 50.♔×g6 e2 51.f7 e1♕ 52.f8♕ +–] 44.♔c5 ♔c7 45.a6 +–) 43.e5 d5 44.♔c5 ♔d7 45.b6 a×b6+ 46.♔×b6! ♔c8 47.♔c5 ♔b7 48.♔d6 d4 49.♔e7 d3 50.♔×f7 d2 51.♔g8 d1♕ 52.f7 ♕d5 53.f8♕ ♕×e5 54.♕f7+ ♔a6 55.♕×g6 ♔×a5 56.♕f6 (D)

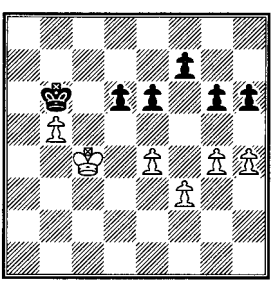


and this queen ending appears to be winning for White.

31.a4 e6 32.b5+

Another option is 32.g4 ♔b6 33.b5 (33.f4 is only a transposition: 33...♔c6 34.f5 g5 35.h×g5 h×g5 36.f×e6 f×e6 37.b5+ a×b5+ 38.a×b5+ ♔b6 39.♔b4 ♔b7 40.♔a5 ♔a7 41.b6+ ♔b7 42.♔b5 e5 43.♔a5 d5 44.e×d5 e4 45.d6 e3 46.d7 e2 47.d8♕ e1♕+ 48.♔b5 ♕e8+! 49.♕×e8 ½-½ Bukavshin-Belous, Kirishi 2010) 33...a5? (33...a×b5+ transposes to the previous note) 34.f4 ♔b7 35.♔d4 ♔b6 36.f5 ♔b7 37.f6 ♔b6 38.g5 h×g5 39.h×g5 ♔b7 40.e5 d5 41.♔c5 ♔c7 42.b6+ ♔b7 43.♔d6 d4 44.♔e7 d3 45.♔×f7 d2 46.♔g8 d1♕ 47.f7 ♕×a4 48.f8♕ ♕c6 49.♔g7 ± .

32...a×b5+ 33.a×b5+ ♔b6 34.g4 (D)



Now Black must be on alert, as he can draw by just moving his king around with... **34...♔b7!**

The wrong continuations are:

(a) 34...♔a5? 35.e5!+−.

(b) 34...g5? 35.h5 f6 (35...♔b7 36.f4! f6 37.f5+−) 36.♔b4 d5 37.e×d5 e×d5 38.♔a4 d4 (38...♔c5 39.♔a5 d4 40.b6 d3 41.b7 d2 42.b8♕ d1♕ 43.♕c7+−) 39.♔b4 d3 40.♔c3 ♔×b5 41.♔×d3 ♔c5 (41...f5 42.f4) 42.♔e4 ♔d6 43.♔f5+−.

(c) 34...f6? 35.h5+−.

(d) 34...h5? 35.g×h5 g×h5 36.♔b4 ♔b7 37.♔a5 d5 38.e×d5 e×d5 39.♔b4 ♔b6 40.♔a4 d4 41.♔b4 d3 42.♔c3 ♔×b5 43.♔×d3 ♔c5 44.♔e4+−.

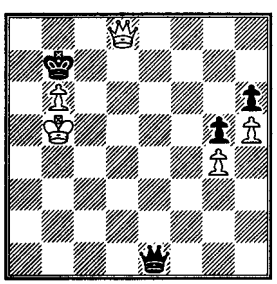
35.f4 ♔b6 36.f5 g5!

36...♔b7 37.f×e6 f×e6 38.♔b4 ♔b6 39.♔a4 ♔b7 40.♔a5 ♔a7 41.b6+ ♔b7 42.♔b5 e5 43.♔a5 d5! 44.e×d5 e4 45.d6 e3 46.d7 e2 47.d8♕ e1♕+ 48.♔b5 ♕e5+ 49.♔c4 ♕e4+ seems good as well.

37.h5

37.h×g5 h×g5 38.f×e6 f×e6 39.♔b4 transposes to the above mentioned game Bukavshin-Belous, Kirishi 2010.

37...♔b7 38.♔b4 ♔b6 39.f×e6 f×e6 40.♔a4 ♔b7 41.♔a5 ♔a7 42.b6+ ♔b7 43.♔b5 e5! 44.♔a5 d5 45.e×d5 e4 46.d6 e3 47.d7 e2 48.d8♕ e1♕+ 49.♔b5 (D)



49...♕e8+! And stalemate is a reality! ½-½

Conclusion

Knowledge in pawn endings is essential for overall success. This survey's conclusions are more or less founded on this concept. Here are two quotes by Rick Kennedy, which I think fit in:

"The fear of the pawn is the beginning of wisdom."

"Pawns are born free, yet are everywhere in chains..."

Rook and Knight

Concept

This survey is focused on the cooperation of rook and knight when supporting a passed d-pawn in the endgame. And this is done when the opposition has the same piece configuration, a rook and knight. Here we will study the way that the advantage should be converted and the various possibilities for both sides but of course mostly for the winner! Modern chess requires cooperation between pieces to complete the attainment of the ultimate target, the full point. So, the placement of the pieces and the way that they are operating can determine the final result. Let's start with an old example:

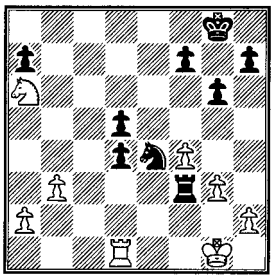
(190) Benko – Rossolimo

New York 1962

Queen's Indian Defense [E14]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 b6 4.e3 ♗b7 5.♗d3 c5 6.0-0 ♗e7 7.b3 0-0 8.♗b2 c×d4 9.e×d4 d5 10.♘bd2 ♘bd7 11.♕e2 ♘h5 12.g3 g6 13.♖ac1 ♘g7 14.♖fd1 ♖c8 15.♘f1 ♘f5 16.♘e3 ♘×e3 17.♕×e3 ♖e8 18.♗f1 ♗f8 19.♗g2 ♕e7 20.♘e1 ♘f6 21.c5 b×c5 22.d×c5 e5 23.f4 ♕×c5 24.♕×c5 ♗×c5+ 25.♔h1 ♘e4 26.♘d3 ♗d4 27.♗×d4 e×d4 28.♗f3 ♗a6

29.♖×c8 ♖×c8 30.♔g1 ♖c3 31.♘b4 ♖×f3 32.♘×a6 (D)



Black has the advantage, as his pieces cooperate well, while their counterparts are "missing" each other. His extra doubled d5-pawn is of little significance for the time being.

32...d3 33.♘b4?

33.b4! is better, although Black retains a nice material advantage: 33...♘c3 (33...d2 34.♘c5! ♘×c5 35.b×c5 ♖c3 36.♖×d2 ♖×c5∓) 34.♖d2 ♘b1! 35.♖d1 d2 36.♘c5 (36.♖×b1 ♖c3−+) 36...♖c3 37.♘b3 ♖d3 38.♔f1 ♘c3 39.♖×d2 ♖×d2 40.♘×d2 ♘×a2∓.

33...d2

Now Black threatens ...♖f2-e2.

34.♔g2

White cannot stop Black. If 34.♘×d5, then 34...♖d3 35.♘b4 ♖d6−+.

34...♖f2+ 35.♔g1 ♖e2

The typical maneuver was completed and Black now wins.

36.♔f1 ♖×h2 37.♔g1 ♖e2 38.♘c2

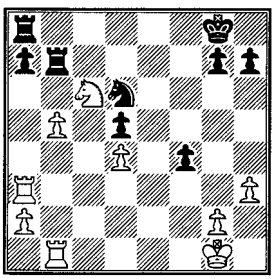
38.♔f1 ♘×g3+

38...♘c3 39.♔f1 ♖h2 40.♔g1 ♘×d1 41.♔×h2 ♘c3 42.♘e3 d4 0-1

Sometimes the weaker side prefers to give up a pawn in order to seek salvation in a more simplified endgame. And it is true that many times this target is achieved. But this happens mainly because the stronger side was simply trying to protect this extra material instead of seeking piece coordination.

(191) Rublevsky – Tiviakov
Kemer 2007
Sicilian Defense [B51]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 d6 4.♗×c6+ b×c6 5.0-0 e5 6.c3 ♘f6 7.♖e1 ♗g4 8.h3 ♗×f3 9.♕×f3 ♗e7 10.d3 0-0 11.♘d2 ♘e8 12.♘c4 ♘c7 13.♗e3 ♘e6 14.b4 c×b4 15.c×b4 ♗g5 16.♖ac1 ♗×e3 17.f×e3 ♕d7 18.♖ed1 ♖ad8 19.d4 e×d4 20.e×d4 ♘g5 21.♕f5 ♘×e4 22.♕×d7 ♖×d7 23.♘a5 f5 24.♘×c6 f4 25.♖d3 d5 26.♖a3 ♖a8 27.b5 ♖b7 28.♖b1 ♘d6 (D)



White stands slightly better as his pressure on the queenside is significant. His pieces are better placed, but Black is not without chances.

29.♖a5 a6?!

A try to reduce the pressure by exchanging pawns. But as Black is giving up a pawn, perhaps he had to try 29...♘c4 30.♖a6 ♘d2 31.♖b2 ♘e4 32.a4±.

30.b6 ♘c4

Forced. If 30...h6?, then 31.♖×d5 ♘c4 32.♖b4! ♘×b6 33.♖a5 and Black is in deep trouble.

31.♖×d5 ♖×b6 32.♖×b6 ♘×b6 33.♖f5! g6 34.♖×f4 ♘d5 35.♖e4 ♖c8

Or 35...♔g7 36.a3 ♖c8 37.♖e6±.

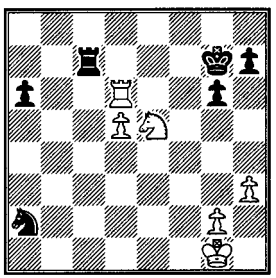
36.♖e6 ♖c7

Black prefers a wait-and-see policy. If instead 36...♘c3, then 37.a3 ♔f7 38.♖d6 ♘b5 39.♘e5+ ♔g8 40.♖×a6 ♘×d4 41.a4±.

37.♖d6 ♘c3 38.♘e5 ♔g7

Maybe the most stubborn defense. Black wouldn't be happy with 38...♘×a2 in view of 39.d5 (39.♖×a6 ♘c3 40.♔f2±) 39...♖e7 40.♖d8+ ♔g7 41.♘d3 ♔f7 42.d6 ♖e8 43.♖d7+ ♔g8 (43...♔e6 44.♘c5+ ♔d5 45.♘b7+−) 44.♘c5±. The white rook and knight, supported by the far-advanced d-pawn, cooperate perfectly.

39.d5 ♘×a2? (D)



The knight is truly drifting away from the scene of the fight and losing the right to influence the proceedings. Black should rather opt for 39...♖e7 40.♘d3 ♖e2 41.♖×a6 ♘×d5 42.a4±.

40.♖e6! ♔f8 41.d6 ♖c8

White also wins after 41...♖c1+ 42.♔h2 ♖d1 43.d7−+.

42.♖f6+

A nice move, driving the black king away.

42...♔g8

42...♔g7 43.d7 ♖d8 44.♖f7+ ♔h6 45.♘c6+−

43.d7

White can now capitalize on his unstoppable passed pawn – his rook and knight are cooperating very well.

43...♖d8 44.♖f7 ♘b4

The black knight tries to return and help but in vain - it is too late.

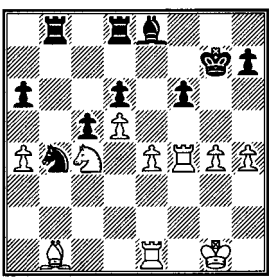
45.♖e7 ♔f8 46.♖×h7 g5 47.♘g6+

Black resigned in view of 47...♔g8 48.♖h8+ +−. **1-0**

And the last example is from a recent FIDE world championship tournament, where Anand showed great technique:

(192) Anand – Grischuk
Mexico City 2007
Ruy Lopez [C88]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 0-0 8.a4 b4 9.d3 d6 10.♘bd2 ♘a5 11.♗a2 c5 12.c3 ♘c6 13.d4 b×c3 14.b×c3 e×d4 15.c×d4 ♘b4 16.♗b1 ♗g4 17.h3 ♗h5 18.g4 ♗g6 19.d5 ♘d7 20.♘c4 ♖b8 21.♗f4 ♘b6 22.♘×b6 ♖×b6 23.♘d2 ♗g5 24.♗×g5 ♕×g5 25.♘c4 ♖bb8 26.♕d2 ♕×d2 27.♘×d2 f6 28.♘c4 ♖fd8 29.f4 ♗f7 30.♖a3 g5 31.h4 g×f4 32.♖f3 ♗e8 33.♖×f4 ♔g7 (D)



White stands better, as his knight is very well placed (pressure on d6) compared to its counterpart which is doing little.

34.h5!!

A fantastic move. All White's pieces (with the exception of the e1-rook) were placed on optimal squares already, but the attack did not seem strong enough yet. For instance, after

the immediate 34.♖ef1 ♗×a4 35.♖×f6 ♗b5 the situation is not entirely clear. The intervention of the modest h-pawn radically tips the balance in White's favor.

34...♗×a4

If Black blocks the h-pawn with 34...h6, the weakness of the g6-square would make itself felt after 35.♖ef1 ♗×a4 36.♖×f6 ♗b5 37.♖g6+, with a decisive attack.

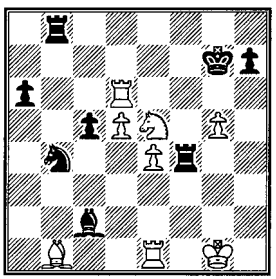
35.h6+ ♔×h6 36.♖×f6+ ♔g7

After 36...♔g5 37.♖ef1 the black king will be in trouble as a result of the cooperation of the white rooks and knight. The black monarch looks so lonely there...

37.g5

The d6-pawn will perish soon and with it any hope of maintaining a reasonable position. Black is in big trouble now.

37...♖f8 38.♖×d6 ♗c2 39.♘e5 ♖f4 (D)



40.♖f6?!

A clever idea, but White should have opted for 40.♖d7+! ♔g8 41.d6 ♗×b1 42.♖×b1 ♖×e4 43.♖e7 ♖d8 44.♖d1± which transposes to the position after White's 45th move.

40...♖h4?!

On the last move before the control, Black does not find a curious tactical resource: 40...♘×d5!? 41.e×d5 ♖e4!!. White's pieces are hanging suddenly, but he can maintain an advantage with 42.♖×e4 ♖×b1+ 43.♔f2 ♗×e4 44.d6 ♖b8 45.d7 ♖d8 46.♔e3. However, Black can hope, because of the reduced amount of material left on the board.

41.d6 ♗×b1 42.♖×b1 ♖×e4

Now White's rooks and knight supports the far advanced d-pawn very well.

43.♖f7+ ♔g8 44.♖e7

The seventh rank is already occupied – the advantage is increasing.

44...♖d8 45.♖d1!

Rooks belong behind passed pawns! The black b4-knight hasn't move yet!

45...c4 46.d7 ♖f4

46...c3 47.♖e8+

47.♖f1!

Exchanging the rook that defends the eighth rank (47.♖e8+ ♖f8) guarantees the win.

47...♖ff8 48.♖×f8+ ♔×f8 49.♖×h7 c3 50.♘g6+

Black resigned in view of 50...♔g8 51.♖h8+. **1-0**

Conclusion

Technique is good training, making points is pure knowledge; all are in great need...

Rook and Rook-pawn vs. Bishop and Rook-pawn

Concept

The ending of ♖+♙ versus ♗+♙ usually is an easy win for the side with the rook. However, the attacking side must be careful, avoiding certain exceptional cases which lead to a draw. Rook pawns (a- and h-) require the utmost attention. As here the concepts that apply to all other pawns are not in force; the king and the rook must cooperate in order to force and cut off the enemy king as far as necessary, to a file from which it will be unable to return to the battlefield in time to secure the draw.

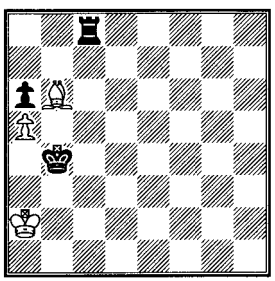
As there are a lot of drawing possibilities, the theoretical understanding of this particular ending is mandatory. We can create a table indicating the file on which the defending king must be cut off to implement the winning plan; that file is determined according to the placement of its own pawn. Naturally, in several cases the win can be achieved by cutting the king off even in a file nearer to the pawns.

Edge Pawn	Cut-off File
a2 / h2	e / d
a3 / h3	f / c
a4 / h4	g / b
a5 / h5	h / a
a6 / h6	h / a

In general, we should know that when the pawns are placed on a4/h4, a5/h5 and a6/h6, then the defending side's king cannot be forcibly cut-off on a desirable (for the stronger side) file. And if it has escaped to the opposite flank of its own pawn, then the position should be characterized as a draw.

Let's start with a basic example coming from my book *Practical Endgame Play – Mastering the Basics* (Everyman 2008), which can be really helpful in terms of understanding the various problems that both sides can face in their effort to reach the desired result.

(193) (D)



1...♖c2+ 2.♔b1 ♔b3 3.♗a7

The only way not to lose the bishop. Black proceeds with his plan (3.♗d8? ♖d2).

3...♖h2! 4.♔c1 ♔c3?

Black should not allow the white king to escape to the flank opposite his pawn. A simple win is in the cards with 4...♖h5! 5.♗b6 ♖d5!.

5.♔d1!

Or 5.♔b1? ♖b2+ 6.♔a1 (6.♔c1 ♖a2!) 6...♔b3! 7.♗b6 ♖h2!.

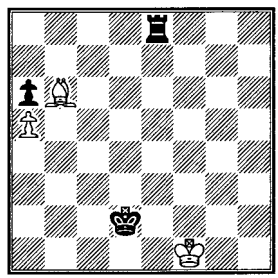
5...♖d2+ 6.♔e1

6.♔c1 ♖a2! with a double threat.

6...♔d3 7.♗b6 ♖h2! 8.♗d8 ♖h1+ 9.♔f2 ♖h8 10.♗b6 ♖e8 11.♔f1

Wrong is 11.♔g1? ♔e2! and the white king will be cut-off in the uncomfortable h-file.

11...♔d2 (D)



12.♗c5?

White could hold the draw with 12.♔f2! (or 12.♔g2) 12...♖f8+ 13.♔g2 ♔e2 14.♔g3! as Black cannot force the white king to move to the h-file.

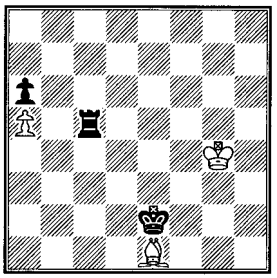
12...♖e5! 13.♗b4+

The alternative effort 13.♗b6 ♖f5+ 14.♔g2 ♔c3! 15.♔g3 ♔b4 16.♔g4 ♖×a5 17.♗×a5+ ♔×a5 18.♔f3 ♔b4 19.♔e2 ♔b3 20.♔d2 ♔b2 would also be in vain.

13...♔d3 14.♔f2 ♖b5! 15.♗e1 ♖f5+ 16.♔g3 ♔e2! 17.♔g4

Or 17.♗b4 (17.♗c3 ♖f3+) 17...♖b5 18.♗c3 ♖b3!.

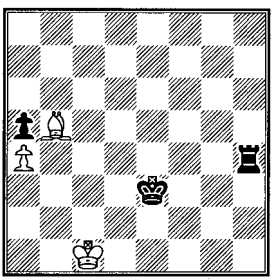
17...♖c5! (D)



Winning either the bishop (18.♗b4 ♖c4+) or the pawn (18.♗g3 ♖×a5). **0-1**

So, a mistake by the defending side handed the full point to the opponent; this is something that happens often in this ending, as the defense must be accurate, while the stronger side has the luxury of being "inaccurate!" Of course, this is the "right" of the side ahead in material! Let's see a second important and instructive example:

(194) (D)



This is an important theoretical position. The evaluation and the recommended methods of play have varied for decades. Of course, things have been settled from theoretical point of view after the creation of the six-piece tablebases, but in many cases one understands very little about the endgame by learning that a couple of moves draw, while all the others lose in 38 moves or less.

A good source to rely on is Yuri Averbakh's five-volume endgame manual His analysis does not contain any real mistakes and although the tablebases sometimes recommend lines that win in one or two moves earlier (36 instead of 38, for example), it is more important to stick with the "human lines," because they are easier to explain as a part of the same general plan. Computer lines sometimes rely on casual tactics, which are nice, but are more difficult to remember if you get this endgame in an over-the-board game.

To start with, the diagrammed position is drawn. Black's only winning chance consists of sacrificing the exchange for the a4-pawn, but he cannot achieve this under favorable circumstances. Things would be different if the pair of pawns was placed on any other file, but it is known that rook pawns offer additional saving chances in pawn endings. In order to reach the desired result, White has to avoid three (!) main situations:

1. His king has to avoid being forced onto the b-file or beyond.

2. His king has to avoid being forced onto the fifth rank or beyond.

3. His king has to avoid being trapped in the immediate neighborhood of the pawn!

The first two points are easy to explain. In case of an exchange sacrifice, the king has to be in time to reach the b1-square. However, the last aspect is far from obvious and, for many decades, remained unnoticed by theoreticians.

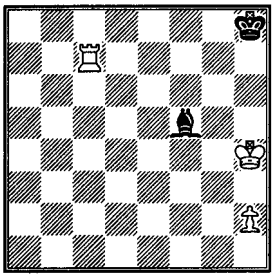
But a significant question remains: how does the rook wins if it is able to capture the opponent's pawn? Here is the solution:

Rook pawns are an exception to what we know so far, assuming of course that the defending king occupies the promotion square.

If this square is of the same color as that on which the bishop moves, then the king is in the wrong corner and thus the side with the rook wins easily.

If however the defending side has a bishop moving on the opposite color, then the win is attainable only if the pawn has not crossed its fourth rank.

(195) (D)

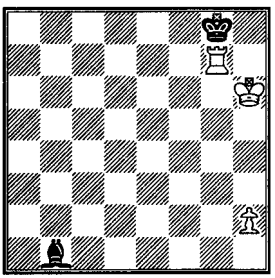


The winning process is long and laborious. The first step is to force the defending king to the f-file.

1.♔g5 ♗b1 2.♔h6 ♔g8

Nothing is changed by 2...♗a2 3.♖h7+ ♔g8 4.♖g7+.

3.♖g7+ (D)



And now Black has two main options:

(a) **3...♔h8 4.h4 ♗d3 5.h5 ♗b1 6.♖b7 ♗a2 7.♖b8+ ♗g8 8.♔g5 ♔g7 9.♖b7+ ♔h8**

Or 9...♔f8 10.h6.

10.♔g6 ♗c4

The rook must follow the bishop's steps and move accordingly so as to prevent any checks.

11.♖h7+ ♔g8 12.♖d7! ♔h8 13.h6 ♗a2 14.h7 ♗b1+ 15.♔h6 1-0

(b) **3...♔f8 4.h4 ♗d3 5.♖g3 ♗e4 6.♖g5!**

The white king must now clear the path of its pawn by retreating via the h5-square, at the same time without allowing the opponent's king to return to h8. Here it becomes evident why the pawn must not have crossed its fourth rank.

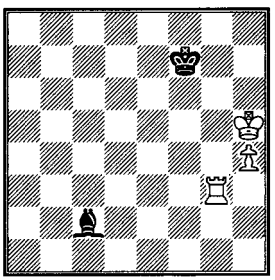
6...♔f7!

The best defense, as 6...♗d3 7.♔h5 ♗e2+ 8.♔g6 ♔g8 9.♖d5 ♔f8 10.h5 is a simple win for White.

7.♖g3 ♗c2

Or 7...♔f8 8.♔g5! ♔g7 9.♔f4+.

8.♔h5 (D)



8...♔f6

Alternatively, 8...♗b1 9.♖g5 (intending ♔g4-f4 and h5-h6) 9...♗c2 10.♔g4 ♗g6 11.h5 ♗b1 12.h6 ♗g6 13.♔f4 ♔f6 14.♖b5 ♗d3 15.♖b7! and 16.h7 or 8...♗d1+ 9.♔g5! ♔g7 10.♖c3 ♗e2 11.h5 ♗f1 12.h6+ ♔h7 13.♖c7+ ♔h8 14.h7 and 15.♔h6.

9.♖g5 ♗d1+ 10.♔h6 ♔f7 11.♖g7+ ♔f6

Or 11...♔f8 12.♔g6 ♗e2 13.♔f6 intending ♖g5, h5-h6, ♖g7 and h7.

12.♖g1 ♗e2 13.♖g2 ♗d3

14.♖f2+ ♗f5

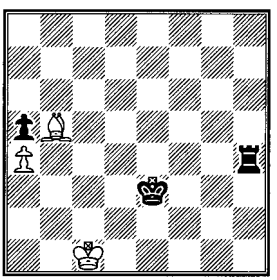
Or 14...♔e7 15.h5 ♗b1 16.♔g7.

15.h5 ♔e6 16.♖×f5! ♔×f5 17.♔g7 1-0

At the start of 2008 I was playing the C group at Corus in Wijk aan Zee and I was lucky enough to be present to watch the following game (that was played in the A group section). I have to say that I was impressed by Radjabov's excellent knowledge of the ending. The analysis of this game was made by the outstanding grandmaster and author Mihail Marin:

(196) Radjabov – Van Wely
Wijk aan Zee 2008
Semi-Slav [D43]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♘f3 e6 5.♗g5 h6 6.♗h4 d×c4 7.e4 g5 8.♗g3 b5 9.♗e2 ♗b7 10.0-0 ♘bd7 11.♘e5 ♗g7 12.♘×d7 ♘×d7 13.♗d6 a6 14.♗h5 ♗f8 15.♗×f8 ♖×f8 16.d5 c×d5 17.e×d5 ♘f6 18.d×e6 ♕×d1 19.♗×f7+ ♔e7 20.♖a×d1 ♖fd8 21.♘e2 ♗e4 22.f4 b4 23.f×g5 h×g5 24.♘g3 ♖×d1 25.♖×d1 ♗h7 26.♘h5 c3 27.♘×f6 ♔×f6 28.b×c3 b×c3 29.♖c1 c2 30.♔f2 ♖d8 31.♔e2 ♖d4 32.h3 ♗e4 33.♗h5 ♔×e6 34.g3 ♔e5 35.h4 g×h4 36.g×h4 ♖d5 37.♗f3 ♖d1 38.♗×e4 ♖×c1 39.♔d2 ♖g1 40.♗×c2 ♔d4 41.♗d3 a5 42.a4 ♖h1 43.♗b5 ♖h2+ 44.♔d1 ♔e3 45.♔c1 ♖×h4 (D)

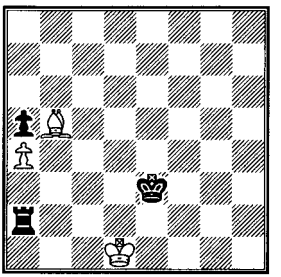


We have reached the diagram in (194).

46.♔c2 ♖h7 47.♗a6 ♖c7+ 48.♔d1!

The only good move! 48.♔b2? is analyzed in Example 4.

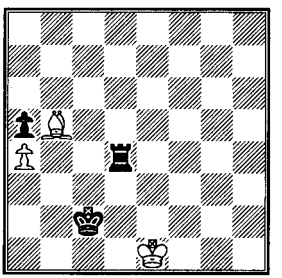
48...♖c6 49.♗b5 ♖c3 50.♗a6 ♖a3 51.♗b5 ♖a2 (D)



52.♔c1!

We notice an important element. Being a long-range piece, the bishop, too, can act on both wings. Here, the control of the d3-square is as important as the defense of the pawn. For instance, the careless 52.♗c6? would lose to 52...♖d2+! 53.♔c1 (53.♔e1 allows 53...♖c2 with a double – and deadly – threat) 53...♔d3 followed by ...♔c3. However, 52.♗e8 is playable, too. After 52...♖d2+ 53.♔e1! the bishop is safe on e8, because the *interposition* of the black king on the e-file prevents the double attack ...♖e2+.

52...♔d4 53.♔d1 ♔c3 54.♔e1 ♖d2 55.♗a6 ♖d4 56.♗b5 ♔c2 (D)

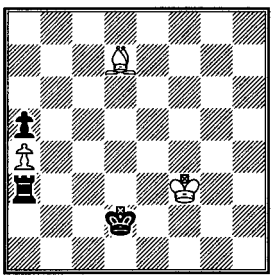


Finally, Black switches plans. He will try to push the enemy king as far away as possible.

57.♔e2 ♖e4+ 58.♔f3 ♖e7 59.♔f2 ♔c3 60.♔f3 ♔d4 61.♗a6 ♖e3+ 62.♔f2!

One important defensive method is the diagonal opposition. On the careless 62.♔f4? Black achieves the situation from point 1 with 62...♖e6 63.♗b5 ♖f6+ 64.♔g3 when 64...♔c3 followed by the exchange sacrifice on a4 ensures an elementary win.

62...♔e4 63.♗b5 ♔f4 64.♗a6 ♖e4 65.♗b5 ♖e6 66.♗c4 ♖e4 67.♗b5 ♖d4 68.♔e2 ♖d6 69.♗d3 ♖h6 70.♗b5 ♔e4 71.♗d3+ ♔d4 72.♗b5 ♖h2+ 73.♔f3 ♖a2 74.♗d7 ♖a3+ 75.♔f2 ♔d3 76.♔f3 ♔d2+ (D)



77.♔f4!

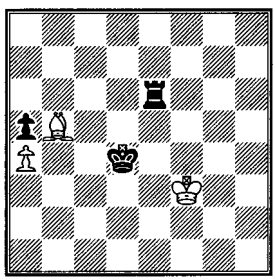
The king has to approach the dangerous fifth rank to maintain the diagonal opposition. 77.♔f2? loses to 77...♖d3 78.♗b5 ♖e3 with *zugzwang*. If the bishop moves, it will be attacked by the rook, followed by a check on the c-file, while 79.♔f1 ♖f3+ immediately drives the king into the forbidden zone.

77...♖e3 78.♗b5!

Again, the control of the d3-square is essential. After a careless move such as

78.♗c6? Black establishes a frontal opposition with 78...♔d3 79.♗b5+ ♔d4, forcing the king to go "higher" than he would have wished. 80.♔f5 (80.♗d7 is met by the familiar maneuver 80...♖e7 81.♗b5 ♖f7+) 80...♖e4 81.♗c6 ♖e5+! 82.♔f6 (or 82.♔f4 ♖e6!) 82...♖e3 83.♔f5 and now Black starts his decisive attack on the opposite wing with 83...♔c5 84.♗b5 ♔b4 85.♔f4 ♖a3 86.♔e4 ♖×a4 87.♗×a4 ♔×a4 88.♔d3 ♔b3 winning.

78...♖e7 79.♔f3 ♔c3 80.♗a6 ♔d4 81.♗b5 ♖e6 (D)



82.♔f2!

Radjabov deals correctly with the last dangerous moment for White in this game. 82.♗d7? loses to 82...♖e3+ 83.♔f2 ♔d3 and so on.

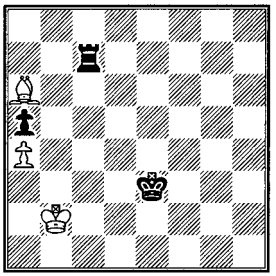
82...♖e5 83.♔f3 ♔c5 84.♔f2 ♔b6 85.♗d3 ♔c5 ½-½

And, having convinced himself that Radjabov knows "everything" about this endgame, van Wely resigned himself to the inevitable.

In 1954, Baranov discovered that Black can avoid being driven too far away and that the logical result would have been a draw. His conclusions are still valid, but only when the defending king escapes the zone surrounding the pawns. Later, the renown endgame expert Maizelis (who was one of Averbakh's collaborators for the first edition of his books, published in the late 1950s), discovered the dangers facing the king in the neighborhood of the pawns. Let's return to the previous

game at the point when White could have gone wrong, his 48th move:

(197) (D)



Here is a sample based on the analysis of the endgame expert Maizelis:

48...♔d2 49.♔b3 ♖c6 50.♗b5 ♖c3+ 51.♔b2

Black's pieces are not optimally placed yet. To win, he has to carry out a major regrouping. His king should reach b4 to restrict the bishop's mobility, but the enemy king should not be allowed to escape from the dangerous zone at the same time!

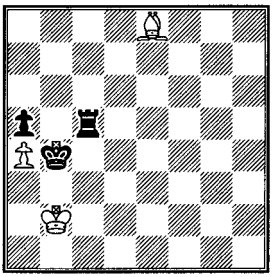
51...♖h3 52.♗d7 ♖h4 53.♗e8 ♖b4+ 54.♔a3 ♔c3

Black has strengthened his domination, but the b4-square is not available yet.

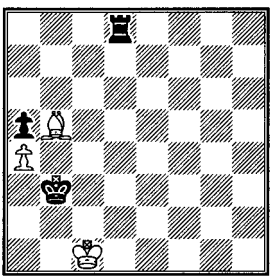
55.♗f7 ♖b1 56.♗a2

White stubbornly keeps his king on a3, keeping b4 defended, but his bishop will not be able to return to the b5-e8 diagonal under favorable circumstances. The voluntary retreat 56.♔a2 leads to a crucial position after 56...♖c1 57.♗e8 ♔b4 58.♔b2 ♖c5 (D)

Black has made his regrouping and White will get in successive *zugzwang* positions. It is typical for such endings that the rook restricts both enemy pieces at the same time. The next step is to push the enemy king to the back rank:



59.♗b5 ♖c8 and now, apart from king retreats which is precisely what Black aims to provoke, White has only one move: 60.♗d7, but this places the bishop on a vulnerable square, allowing the rook to switch to lateral attacks, without letting the king escape from the corner: 60...♖d8! 61.♗b5 ♖d2+ 62.♔c1 ♔c3 and Black has made further progress and now the same method as on the previous step ensures the win: 63.♔b1 ♔b3 64.♔c1 ♖d8 (D)



White is in *zugzwang* again. The only move that maintains the pawn defended and avoids mate in one is 65.♗c6 but this loses the bishop to 65...♖c8.

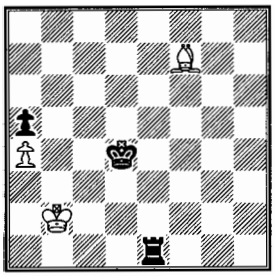
56...♖c1

Avoiding the trap 56...♖a1? with complete domination and... draw by stalemate – this is one of the tricks to be aware of!

57.♗b3 ♖a1+ 58.♗a2 ♔d4

The king retreats to enable lateral attacks by the rook. With the a4-pawn vulnerable now, White cannot save the game.

59.♔b2 ♖e1 60.♗f7 (D)



A desperate attempt to return with the bishop to the b5-e8 diagonal. 60.♗b1 leaves the c4-square undefended, allowing a relatively easy win after 60...♔c4 61.♗f5 ♔b4 62.♗d7 ♖d1 63.♗b5 ♖d2+ 64.♔c1 ♔c3 and so on, as in the variation starting with 56.♔a2 above. 60.♗b3 keeps the c4-square defended, but deprives the white king of the b3-square and places the bishop on a vulnerable square: 60...♔c5! 61.♔c3 ♖e3+!. With the bishop on a favorable square, the white king could escape now to the right wing, but here this is impossible: 62.♔b2 ♔b4 63.♗d1 ♖g3 64.♗c2 ♖g2 65.♔c1 ♔c3 and it is all over.

60...♖e7 61.♗h5

Or 61.♗g8 ♔c5 62.♔c3 ♖e3+ 63.♔b2 ♔b4 with a familiar position.

61...♔c4 62.♗f3 ♔b4 63.♗c6

Finally, the bishop has returned to the "good" diagonal, but in the meantime, Black has carried out his essential regrouping.

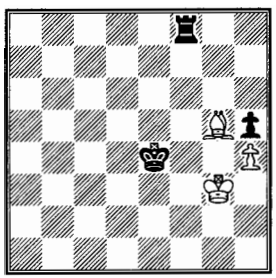
63...♖c7 64.♗e8 ♖c5 65.♗b5 ♖c8

And we have reached a familiar *zugzwang*. **0-1**

Here is an old and very famous example. For many years it was supposed that it was an ideal execution by Rubinstein! But of course the truth is that many mistakes took place and Black's concept was wrong but in the end he was lucky to cash the point. Well, luck favors the stronger...

(198) Salwe – Rubinstein
Prague 1908
Four Knights Game [C49]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♘c3 ♘f6 4.♗b5 ♗b4 5.0-0 0-0 6.d3 d6 7.♗g5 ♘e7 8.♘e2 ♘g6 9.♘g3 h6 10.♗e3 c6 11.♗a4 d5 12.c3 ♗d6 13.♗c2 ♖e8 14.♖e1 ♗e6 15.d4 d×e4 16.♗×e4 e×d4 17.♗×d4 ♘×e4 18.♘×e4 ♗f8 19.b4 b6 20.a3 ♕c7 21.♘fd2 f5 22.♘g3 c5 23.♕f3 ♕f7 24.♖×e6 ♕×e6 25.♗e3 ♘h4 26.♕h5 ♕f6 27.♖c1 ♖ad8 28.♘f3 ♘×f3+ 29.♕×f3 g6 30.♘e2 ♕f7 31.h4 ♔h7 32.g3 ♗d6 33.♔g2 ♕e6 34.♖d1 ♕e4 35.♕×e4 f×e4 36.♖b1 ♖e7 37.a4 c×b4 38.c×b4 ♖c8 39.a5 b×a5 40.b×a5 ♗c5 41.♗f4 ♖d8 42.♖b5 ♗d4 43.♘×d4 ♖×d4 44.♗e3 ♖a4 45.♖d5 ♔g7 46.g4 ♖c4 47.♗d4+ ♔f7 48.♗e3 ♔e6 49.♖b5 ♖h7 50.a6 ♖a4 51.♖b7 ♖×b7 52.a×b7 ♖b4 53.♗×a7 ♖×b7 54.♗e3 h5 55.♔g3 ♖f7 56.♗f4 ♖f8 57.f3 ♔d5 58.g×h5 g×h5 59.f×e4+ ♔×e4 60.♗g5 (D)



According to endgame tablebases Black wins with best play in 48 moves!

60...♖f7 61.♗h6 ♖f3+ 62.♔g2 ♖d3?

Now, as we have seen in the previ-

ous examples, White should be able to survive! Rubinstein obviously wanted to push the enemy king away from the pawn and then sacrifice the exchange. This plan does not work against the best defense. The correct plan is actually the opposite: to keep the white king closer to the pawn, so his bishop won't be much help in defense.

63.♗g5?

White missed his defensive idea with 63.♔f2!=.

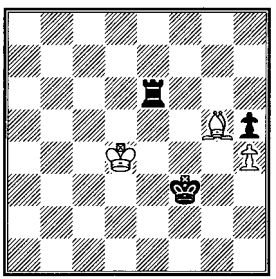
63...♔f5?

63...♖f3! was again correct. Rubinstein managed to win the game, but only by a... mistaken method! He chased the king away from the danger zone and eventually succeeded in driving it to the fifth rank, after which the win was relatively easy.

64.♔f2!

Finally, White found the correct idea.

64...♔g4 65.♔e2 ♖f3 66.♗h6 ♔g3 67.♗g5 ♖f8 68.♔e3 ♖e8+ 69.♔d3 ♔f3 70.♔d4 ♖e6 (D)



71.♔d5?

But not like that! White should have opted for 71.♔c4 ♔e4 72.♔c3! (the only move) 72...♖d6 73.♔c2!! (again, the only move) – White must keep diagonal opposition – this is the key idea in this ending.

71...♖e4!

Now White is busted.

72.♗f6 ♔f4 73.♗d8 ♔f5 74.♗g5 ♖g4!

After White's incorrect 71st move, Rubinstein plays nearly always the strongest continuations.

75.♗e7 ♖g7 76.♗f8

76.♗g5 ♖×g5 77.h×g5 ♔×g5 -+

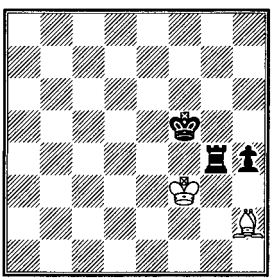
76...♖d7+ 77.♔c6 ♖d4 78.♗e7 ♔e6 79.♔c5 ♖d5+ 80.♔c4 ♖f5 81.♗d8 ♔d7 82.♗b6

82.♗g5 ♖×g5 83.h×g5 h4 84.g6 ♔e7 -+

82...♖f4+ 83.♔d3 ♖×h4

Black has won the pawn and the rest is relatively easy.

84.♔e2 ♔e6 85.♔f3 ♖g4 86.♗f2 ♔f5 87.♗g3 h4 88.♗h2 (D)



A similar position to that which we saw in Example 3.

88...♖b4?

But here Black goes wrong. Correct was 88...h3! 89.♗g3 ♖g7 90.♗f4 ♖g2 91.♗d6 ♖d2-+.

89.♔g2!

And now, according to databases, this is a drawn position!

89...♔g4 90.♗e5 ♖a4 91.♗d6 ♖a2+ 92.♔h1 ♔h3 93.♗c5?

And White returns the favor! 93.♔g1 ♖a1+ 94.♔f2= was good enough.

93...♖a1+ 94.♗g1 ♔g4!

This is the winning method already presented above.

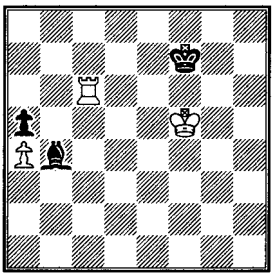
95.♔h2 ♖a2+ 96.♔h1 ♔g3 97.♗c5 ♖h2+ 98.♔g1 ♖d2 99.♔h1 h3

And White was forced to resign...
0-1

Mistakes are the salt and pepper of modern knowledge. The next four examples are quite instructive, as much "salt and pepper" can be found! But the winning and defending methods are the same and one must study them:

(199) Mortensen – Baburin
Copenhagen 1994
Alekhine's Defense [B03]

1.e4 ♘f6 2.e5 ♘d5 3.d4 d6 4.c4 ♘b6 5.e×d6 c×d6 6.a4 a5 7.♘c3 g6 8.♗e3 ♗g7 9.♖c1 0-0 10.♘f3 ♗g4 11.b3 d5 12.♘b5 d×c4 13.b×c4 ♘c6 14.♗e2 e5 15.d5 ♘b4 16.0-0 ♖c8 17.d6 ♗×f3 18.♗×f3 ♘×c4 19.d7 ♖c6 20.♗a7 ♘b2 21.♕d2 ♘2d3 22.♗×c6 b×c6 23.♖×c6 ♘×c6 24.♕×d3 ♘d4 25.♗c5 ♕×d7 26.♗×f8 ♗×f8 27.♘×d4 e×d4 28.♕b5 ♕c7 29.g3 ♗b4 30.♖d1 ♗c3 31.♖b1 ♔g7 32.♕d5 ♕e7 33.♔g2 h5 34.♖b7 ♕f6 35.h4 ♗b4 36.♖d7 ♗c3 37.f4 ♔g8 38.♔f3 ♔g7 39.♔e4 ♗e1 40.♔f3 ♗c3 41.g4 h×g4+ 42.♔×g4 ♗e1 43.♕e5 ♗c3 44.♔f3 ♕×e5 45.f×e5 ♔f8 46.♔e4 ♔e8 47.♖a7 ♔f8 48.♔d3 ♔g8 49.♖d7 ♔f8 50.♖c7 ♗b2 51.♔e4 ♔g8 52.♖c5 ♗c3 53.♖c8+ ♔g7 54.♔d3 ♗b2 55.♖d8 ♗c3 56.♔e4 ♗b2 57.♖c8 ♗c3 58.♖c7 ♔f8 59.e6 f×e6 60.♔e5 ♗e1 61.♖d7 ♗×h4 62.♔×e6 d3 63.♖×d3 ♔g7 64.♖d7+ ♔h6 65.♔f7 g5 66.♔f6 ♗e1 67.♔f5 ♗b4 68.♖c7 g4 69.♖c6+ ♔g7 70.♔×g4 ♔f7 71.♔f5 (D)

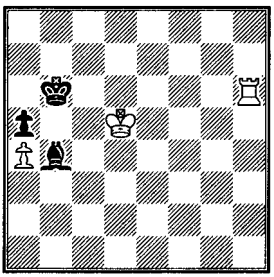


According to tablebases, this position is a draw. Indeed, the black king is in the right zone – not too close to the pawn.

71...♔e7 72.♔e5 ♔d7 73.♔d5 ♗a3 74.♖c2 ♗b4 75.♖h2 ♔c7

This move is still fine but conceptually it is better to move away from the pawn: 75...♔e7!.

76.♖h7+ ♔b6 77.♖h6+ (D)



77...♔b7?

77...♔c7! was the only move!

78.♔c4?

Now White returns the favor. He had to cut off the black king with 78.♖c6!. Here is White's path to victory: 78...♗a3 79.♖c4 ♗b4 80.♔e6 ♗a3 81.♔d7 ♔b6 82.♖c6+ ♔b7 83.♖e6 ♗b4 84.♖e5 ♗c3 85.♖b5+ ♔a6 86.♔c6 ♗d4 87.♖d5 ♗f6 88.♖d6 ♗e7 89.♖e6 ♗b4 90.♖e8 ♔a7 91.♔b5 ♔b7 92.♖d8 ♔c7 93.♖d1 ♔b8 94.♖d7 ♔c8 95.♔c6 ♗c3 96.♖d1 ♗b4 97.♔b6 – the key position – White wins.

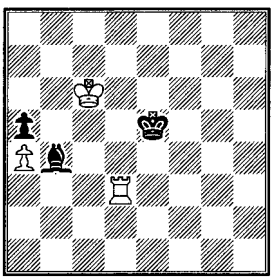
78...♔c7 79.♔b5 ♗d2?

Of course it is not easy to defend. Here 79...♔d7!= was correct.

80.♖c6+?

White could achieve a winning position with the well-known 80.♖h1! ♗b4 81.♖d1 +−.

80...♔d7 81.♖c4 ♗b4 82.♔b6 ♔d6 83.♖d4+ ♔e5 84.♖d8 ♔e6 85.♔c6 ♔e5 86.♖d3 (D)



86...♔e4?

The black king moves to the unfavorable zone. Black could have drawn with a lot of other moves, such as 86...♔e6, 86...♔f5 and 86...♔f6.

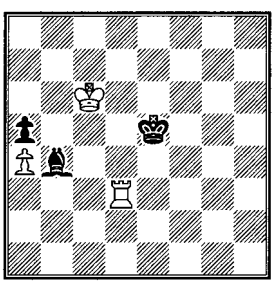
87.♖d5! ♗c3 88.♖h5?

Both opponents seem to ignore basic rules of the ending. Correct was 88.♔c5 ♗b4+ 89.♔c4 +−.

88...♔d4!

Back to the draw!

89.♖h4+ ♔e5! 90.♖h1 ♔d4 91.♔b5 ♗b4 92.♖d1+ ♔e5 93.♖d8 ♔e6 94.♔c6 ♔e5 95.♖h8 ♗c3 96.♖h5+ ♔d4 97.♖h4+ ♔e5 98.♖c4 ♗b4 99.♖c1 ♔e6 100.♖d1 ♔e5 101.♖d3 (D)



101...♔e4?

Repeating the same mistake!

102.♖d5! ♗c3 103.♔d6 ♗b4+ 104.♔e6?!

104.♔c6 ♗c3 105.♔c5 ♗b4+ 106.♔c4 wins.

104...♗c3 105.♖d1 ♗b4 106.♔d7?!

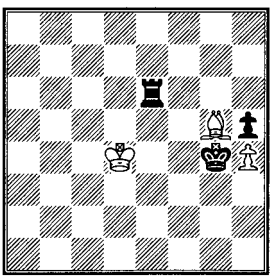
The final "mistake." The correct continuation according to theory was 106.♖d5! ♗c3 107.♔d6 ♗b4+ 108.♔c6, although Black could then claim a draw by threefold repetition!

106...♔e5 107.♔c6 ♔e6 108.♔b5 ♔e5 109.♔c4 ♔e6 110.♖d5 ♗e1 111.♔d4 ♗c3+ 112.♔c4 ♗e1 113.♖d1 ♗b4 114.♔d3 ½-½

(200) Aloma Vidal – Cabrera
Calvia 2007
Dutch Defense [A85]

1.d4 f5 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e6 4.♘f3 ♗b4 5.♗f4 b6 6.e3 ♗b7 7.♗e2 ♗×c3+ 8.b×c3 d6 9.c5 d×c5 10.d×c5 ♕×d1+ 11.♖×d1 ♘d5 12.♗e5 ♘d7 13.c4 ♘5f6 14.c6 ♗×c6 15.♗×c7 ♘e4 16.♘d4 ♖c8 17.♗g3 ♔e7 18.0-0 ♘c3 19.♖d3 ♘×e2+ 20.♘×e2 ♗a4 21.♖c1 a6 22.♗d6+ ♔f6 23.f4 ♗c6 24.♘d4 ♗b7 25.♖b3 ♖hd8 26.a4 ♗e4 27.a5 b5 28.♖bc3 b×c4 29.♖×c4 ♖×c4 30.♖×c4 h6 31.♖c7 g5 32.♖a7 g×f4 33.e×f4 ♗d5 34.♖×a6 ♖c8 35.♖a7 ♖c1+ 36.♔f2 ♘c5 37.♗e5+ ♔g6 38.♔e2 ♖a1 39.♖g7+ ♔h5 40.♘×f5 ♖a2+ 41.♔e3 e×f5 42.♔d4 ♘e6+ 43.♔×d5 ♘×g7 44.♗×g7 ♖×a5+ 45.♔e6 ♔g6 46.♗e5 ♖a6+ 47.♗d6 ♖a2 48.h4 h5 49.g3 ♖g2 50.♔d5 ♖×g3 51.♗e7 ♖d3+ 52.♔e6 ♖e3+ 53.♔d6 ♔f7 54.♗g5 ♖e4 55.♔d5 ♖e1 56.♔d6 ♖a1 57.♔e5 ♖a5+ 58.♔d6 ♖b5 59.♗d8 ♖b1 60.♗g5 ♖e1 61.♔d5 ♖e4 62.♔d6 ♔e8 63.♗h6 ♔d8 64.♗g5+ ♔c8 65.♗h6 ♔b7

66.♗g5 ♔b6 67.♗f6 ♖×f4 68.♔e5 ♖f1 69.♗g5 ♔c6 70.♗f4 ♖h1 71.♗g5 ♖f1 72.♗f4 ♖f2 73.♔×f5 ♔d5 74.♔g5 ♔e4 75.♗d6 ♖d2 76.♗e7 ♖d5+ 77.♔g6 ♔f4 78.♗g5+ ♔g4 79.♔f6 ♖d6+ 80.♔e5 ♖g6 81.♔e4 ♖e6+ 82.♔d4 (D)



According to the endgame tablebases, this position is a draw. Interestingly, if the white king were on f2, Black would be winning! Black should try to get the white king closer to the h-pawn and then attack it, forcing the white bishop to leave its post on g5. The other plan – to push the white king far away from the pawn and then sacrifice the exchange – does not work against best defense.

82...♔f3 83.♔d5?

White had three moves, which would draw with correct play: 83.♔c4, 83.♔c3 and 83.♔d3.

83...♖e4! 84.♗f6 ♖a4?

Only 84...♔f4! 85.♗d4 ♔f5 86.♗f6 ♖g4 87.♗d8 ♖g1 88.♗e7 ♖g7 89.♗b4 ♔g4 90.♗e1 ♖f7 91.♔d4 ♖f1–+ or 84...♔e3! win – the former in 27 moves and the latter in 29 moves.

85.♗g5?

85.♔e5!=

85...♔g4?

85...♖e4!

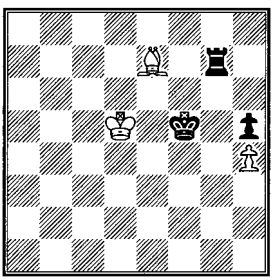
86.♔e5! ♖b4 87.♗d8 ♖b5+ 88.♔e4 ♖b8 89.♗g5 ♖e8+ 90.♔d4 ♔f5 91.♔d3 ♔g4 92.♔d4 ♔f3 93.♔d5?

White voluntarily leaves the safe zone. 93.♔d3 was correct.

93...♖e4! 94.♗f6 ♔f4 95.♗d8 ♔f5!

Black has finally found the correct plan.

96.♗g5 ♖g4 97.♗d8 ♖g8 98.♗e7 ♖g7 (D)



99.♗f8 ♖d7+ 100.♔c6 ♖d8 101.♗e7 ♖e8 102.♗g5 ♖g8 103.♗e7 ♔e6 104.♗c5 ♖c8+ 105.♔b5 ♔d5

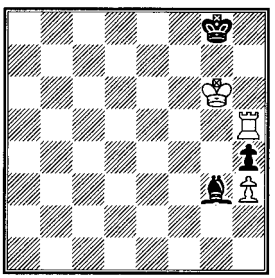
105...♔f5 also wins.

106.♗a7 ♖c2 107.♔b4 ♖h2 108.♔b3 ♖×h4 109.♔c3 ♔e4 110.♔d2 ♔f3 0-1

(201) Kuzmicz – Musialkiewicz
Warsaw 2009
Sicilian Defense [B20]

1.e4 c5 2.d3 e6 3.g3 ♘c6 4.♗g2 g6 5.f4 ♗g7 6.♘f3 ♘ge7 7.0-0 0-0 8.c3 d6 9.♗e3 f5 10.♘a3 b6 11.♖e1 ♗b7 12.e×f5 ♘×f5 13.♗f2 ♕d7 14.♘g5 ♖ae8 15.♕b3 ♘a5 16.♕b5 ♕c8 17.♗×b7 ♘×b7 18.♕a6 h6 19.♘×e6 ♖×e6 20.♖×e6 ♕×e6 21.♕×b7 ♕e2 22.♕d5+ ♔h7 23.♖b1 ♕d2 24.♕e4 d5 25.♕×d5 ♖e8 26.♘c4 ♕c2 27.♘a3 ♕d2 28.♕f3 ♖d8 29.♘c4 ♕c2 30.♕d1 ♕×d3 31.♕×d3 ♖×d3 32.a4 ♘d6 33.♘×d6 ♖×d6 34.♗e3 c4 35.a5 b×a5 36.♖a1 ♖d5 37.♗×a7 ♖d2

38.♖×a5 ♖×b2 39.♖a4 ♖b7 40.♗f2 ♗×c3 41.♖×c4 ♗g7 42.♔g2 ♖d7 43.♔f3 ♖d3+ 44.♗e3 ♖d7 45.h3 h5 46.♖c6 ♖b7 47.♖a6 ♖b3 48.♖a7 ♔g8 49.♔e4 ♖b4+ 50.♔d5 ♖b3 51.♖e7 ♗f6 52.♖e4 ♔f7 53.g4 ♖b1 54.♖a4 ♖d1+ 55.♔e4 ♖h1 56.♖a7+ ♔g8 57.♖a6 ♔f7 58.g×h5 g×h5 59.♔f5 ♗e7 60.♖a7 ♔f8 61.♔g6 ♗d6 62.♔f6 ♔g8 63.♖g7+ ♔h8 64.♔f7 ♖f1 65.♖g5 ♗×f4 66.♖f5 ♗×e3 67.♖×f1 ♔h7 68.♔f6 ♔h6 69.♔f5 ♗b6 70.♖d1 ♗c7 71.♖d7 ♗g3 72.♖d8 h4 73.♔f6 ♔h7 74.♖d5 ♔g8 75.♖h5 ♗f2 76.♔g6 ♗g3 (D)



White is winning, as long as he can keep the enemy king in the right corner.

77.♖b5?

But not like that! Correct was 77.♖f5! ♗h2 78.♖d5 ♔f8 79.♖d4 ♗g3 80.♖e4 and Black is in *zugzwang*.

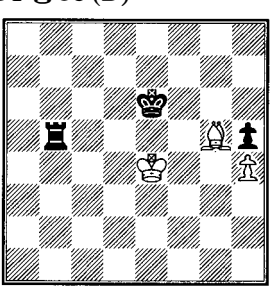
77...♔f8!

Black escapes the box and finds salvation.

78.♔f6 ♔e8 79.♔e6 ♔d8 80.♖g5 ♔c7 81.♖c5+ ♔b6 82.♔d5 ♔b7 83.♖c6 ♗f2 84.♖h6 ♗g3 85.♖h7+ ♔b6 86.♖h6+ ♔b7 87.♖g6 ♗f2 88.♔e4 ♗g3 89.♔f3 ♔c7 90.♔e4 ♔b7 91.♔d5 ♗f2 92.♖g7+ ♔b6 ½-½

(202) Deszczynski – Bologan
Warsaw 2009
Sicilian Defense [B51]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.♗b5+ ♘d7 4.d4 ♘gf6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗×d7+ ♘×d7 7.♗g5 h6 8.♗h4 g5 9.♗g3 ♗g7 10.0-0 0-0 11.♖e1 b5 12.e5 d×e5 13.d×e5 b4 14.♘e4 ♕b6 15.♕d5 ♖a7 16.♖ad1 ♗b7 17.♕c4 ♗a8 18.♕e2 ♕g6 19.c4 ♖c8 20.h3 ♘f8 21.h4 g4 22.♘h2 h5 23.♘g5 f6 24.♘e4 ♕×e4 25.♕×e4 ♗×e4 26.♖×e4 f5 27.♖ee1 ♘e6 28.♘f1 f4 29.♗h2 ♖f8 30.♖d5 ♖f5 31.♘d2 ♖c7 32.♘b3 ♔h7 33.♔h1 f3 34.♖e4 ♗h6 35.♗g3 ♔g6 36.♔g1 ♖f8 37.♘d2 ♗×d2 38.♖×d2 ♘d4 39.♖e×d4 c×d4 40.♖×d4 a5 41.b3 a4 42.♖d5 ♖a7 43.♖b5 a×b3 44.a×b3 ♖a1+ 45.♔h2 f×g2 46.♔×g2 ♖d8 47.♖×b4 ♖dd1 48.♗h2 ♔f5 49.c5 ♖ac1 50.♖f4+ ♔e6 51.b4 ♖d8 52.♖e4 ♖b8 53.♗f4 ♔d5 54.♗×c1 ♔×e4 55.♗d2 ♔×e5 56.f3 g×f3+ 57.♔×f3 ♖f8+ 58.♔e3 ♔d5 59.♔d3 e5 60.♗e3 ♖b8 61.♔c3 ♖b7 62.♔b3 ♖f7 63.♔c3 ♖f3 64.♔d3 e4+ 65.♔e2 ♔c4 66.c6 ♖f7 67.♗d2 ♔d5 68.b5 ♔c5 69.♔e3 ♔×b5 70.♔×e4 ♔×c6 71.♗f4 ♔d7 72.♔e5 ♔e7 73.♗g5+ ♔f8 74.♗f6 ♖b7 75.♔e6 ♖b6+ 76.♔f5 ♔f7 77.♗g5 ♖b5+ 78.♔e4 ♔e6 (D)



This is drawn, but White must know how to defend. As previously stated, the key idea is to avoid the area close to the h-pawn.

79.♔d4 ♖b4+ 80.♔d3 ♔d5 81.♗f6 ♖f4 82.♗g5 ♖f3+ 83.♔e2 ♔e4 84.♗e7 ♖b3 85.♔f2

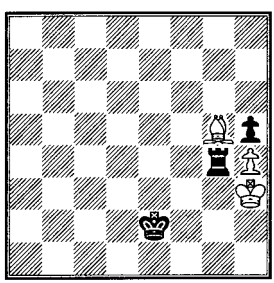
This move does not lose, but it would be easier to defend after 85.♔d2!.

85...♖b2+ 86.♔g3?

Now the white king gets locked up near the h-pawn. Black will create mating threats, forcing the enemy bishop to abandon the pawn. Of course 86.♔e1!= would do the job...

86...♖b7! 87.♗g5 ♖f7 88.♔g2 ♖b7?

It is clear that even a strong player such as grandmaster Viktor Bologan isn't familiar with this endgame... 88...♔d3! 89.♔g3 ♔e2 90.♔g2 ♖d7 91.♗f4 ♖d4 92.♔g3 ♖c4 93.♗g5 ♖g4+ 94.♔h3 (D)



94...♔f3 95.♗e7 ♖g3+ 96.♔h2 ♔g4 97.♗g5 ♖f3 98.♔g2 ♖f8 99.♗e7 ♖e8 100.♗g5 ♖e2+ 101.♔f1 ♔f3 102.♗f6 ♖e8 103.♗c3 (103.♗g5 ♔g3−+) 103...♔g3 104.♗e1+ ♔g4 105.♗f2 ♔f3−+.

89.♔g3?

Missing 89.♔f2!=.

89...♖b2?

89...♖f7!

90.♗e7?

90.♗h6!

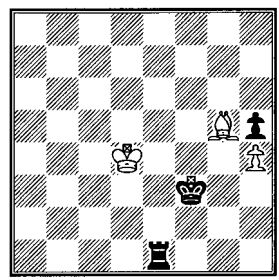
90...♖b3+? 91.♔g2? ♔f4?

91...♖f3!

92.♗g5+ ♔g4 93.♔f2!

After a series of bad moves, White found the correct defense.

93...♖f3+ 94.♔e2 ♔g3 95.♗e7 ♖f5 96.♗g5 ♖e5+ 97.♔d3 ♔f3 98.♔d4 ♖e1 (D)



99.♔d5?

Only to mess it up again! As noted, White should not go above the fourth rank in such positions, so 99.♔c4 was a must.

99...♖e4!

Finally, Black wins with the usual trick.

100.♔d6

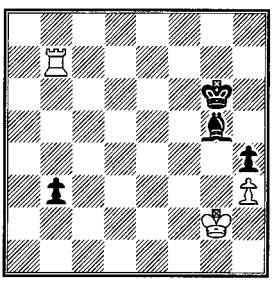
Black's task would be much more difficult after 100.♗d8 but of course he still wins: 100...♔f4 101.♗g5+ ♔f5 102.♗d8 ♖g4.

100...♔g3 101.♔d5 ♖×h4 0-1

Although our first example had pawns on a5 and a6 (h5/h6), to this point we have seen games where the pawns were placed on the fourth and the fifth ranks. In this case the situation is slightly different, as the defending side has a spatial advantage of space as a result of the presence of pawns on those ranks. But of course, all previous concepts, methods and ways are also valid here.

(203) Kramnik – Ponomariov
Moscow 2009
Queen's Gambit Declined [D38]

1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♘f6 3.♘f3 d5 4.♘c3 ♗b4 5.♗g5 ♘bd7 6.c×d5 e×d5 7.e3 c5 8.d×c5 ♕a5 9.♖c1 ♘e4 10.♕×d5 ♘×c3 11.b×c3 ♗×c3+ 12.♔d1 0-0 13.♗c4 ♘f6 14.♗×f6 ♗×f6 15.♔e2 b5 16.c6 ♗a6 17.♕f5 ♕a3 18.♗d3 ♖fd8 19.c7 ♕×a2+ 20.♘d2 ♖×d3 21.♕×d3 b4 22.♔f3 ♗b7+ 23.♔g3 h5 24.h3 ♕a5 25.f4 ♖c8 26.♘c4 ♕a6 27.♘e5 ♕×d3 28.♘×d3 ♗c3 29.♖hd1 a5 30.♘c5 ♖×c7 31.♘a4 ♗e4 32.♖d6 ♔h7 33.♖a6 h4+ 34.♔h2 ♖d7 35.♘c5 ♖e7 36.♖×a5 ♗d2 37.♖c4 f5 38.♘×e4 f×e4 39.♖h5+ ♔g6 40.♖g5+ ♔f6 41.♖c6+ ♔f7 42.♖f5+ ♔g8 43.g4 ♖e8 44.♖e5 ♖b8 45.g5 ♔h7 46.♖e7 ♗×e3 47.♖h6+ ♔g8 48.♖g6 ♗d4 49.♖ge6 ♔h7 50.f5 ♗c5 51.♖e8 ♖×e8 52.♖×e8 b3 53.♔g2 ♗e3 54.♖×e4 ♗×g5 55.♖b4 g6 56.♖b7+ ♔h6 57.f×g6 ♔×g6 (D)



58.♔f3! ♗d2 59.♔g4 ♗e1 60.♖×b3

From this point the tablebases show the ending is winning for White. Although Kramnik doesn't always take the most straightforward path, he knows the basic principles of the winning method and he never jeopardizes his victory. If the black king could cross the e-file then apparently it would be a draw.

60...♗g3

Or 60...♔f6 61.♖f3+ ♔g6 62.♖e3+-.

61.♖f3

61.♖e3+- is the same, but 61.♖b6+? ♔f7 62.♔f5 ♔e7= allows Black's king to escape the dangerous corner.

61...♗e1

61...♔h6 62.♖f6+ ♔g7 63.♔g5 ♗c7 64.♖e6 ♔f7 65.♖e4 ♗g3 66.♖e3 ♔g7 67.♖f3 ♗e1 68.♖f1 ♗g3 69.♔h5 ♔h7 70.♖f7+ ♔g8 71.♔g6 ♗h2 72.♖d7 ♔f8 73.♖d4 ♗g3 74.♖e4 and *zugzwang*! We will see this method (and final position) in the game as well.

62.♖e3 ♗f2

Similar is 62...♗g3 63.♖e6+ ♔f7 64.♔f5+-.

63.♖e6+ ♔f7 64.♔f5

64.♖e2! ♗g3 65.♔g5 is slightly faster.

64...♗g3 65.♖e4 ♗f2 66.♔g5 ♗g3 67.♖e2

See the 64.♖e2! line.

67...♔g7 68.♖e7+ ♔f8 69.♔f6 ♗f2 70.♖e6

70.♔e6! ♗e1 (70...♗d4 71.♖h7+-) 71.♖c7 ♗g3 72.♖a7 ♗h2 (72...♗e1 73.♔f6 ♗c3+ 74.♔g6 ♗e1 75.♖a4! ♗g3 76.♖e4+-) 73.♖f7+! ♔g8 (73...♔e8 74.♖h7+-) 74.♔f6 ♗g3 75.♔g6 – 61...♔h6

70...♗g3 71.♔g6 ♗h2 72.♖e4 ♗g3

We have already seen that White must reach this position with Black to move, thus forcing *zugzwang*.

73.♔f6 ♗f2 74.♔g6

74.♖e7! ♗d4+ 75.♔e6 ♗c3 76.♖h7 ♗e1 77.♖c7 ♗g3 78.♖a7 – 70.♔e6!

74...♗g3 75.♖e2 ♗d6 76.♔g5

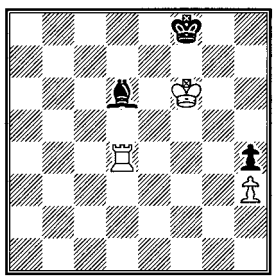
♗g3

76...♗e7+ 77.♔f5 ♗c5 78.♖e4 ♗f2 79.♔f6 ♗c5 (79...♗g3 80.♔g6) 80.♖a4 ♗e7+ (80...♔e8 81.♔e6) 81.♔e6 ♗g5 82.♖a7 ♔g8 83.♔f5 ♗e3 84.♖a3 ♗c5 85.♖a5 ♗d6 86.♖a4 ♗g3 (86...♗e7 87.♔g6) 87.♔g6 ♔f8 88.♖e4+–.

77.♔f6 ♗f4 78.♖e4 ♗d6

78...♗c7 79.♖c4 ♗d8+ 80.♔f5 ♔f7 81.♖d4 ♗e7 82.♖d7+–

79.♖d4 (D)



79...♗c7

More resilient, but equally hopeless is 79...♗e7+ 80.♔f5 ♔f7 (the king won't escape: 80...♔e8 81.♔e6 ♔f8 82.♖f4+ ♔e8 83.♖a4+–) 81.♖d7 ♔f8 82.♔e6 ♗g5 83.♖b7 ♗d2 (83...♔g8 84.♔f5 ♗d2 85.♔g6 ♔f8 86.♖b5 ♗c1 [86...♗e1 87.♖f5+] 87.♖h5+–) 84.♖f7+! ♔g8 (84...♔e8 85.♖h7) 85.♔f6 ♗e1 86.♔g6 ♗g3 87.♖e7 ♔f8 88.♖e4+–.

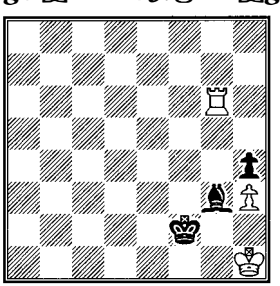
80.♔g6 ♗g3 81.♖e4

This is the position we saw above after move 72 when White was to move. Now it is Black's turn and he is in *zugzwang*. **1–0**

If the king is free, the attacker has to push him one file further than in the previous examples, namely to the opposite edge of the board. In Kasparov's game against Pinter, the former world champion managed to avoid this and achieve a draw.

(204) Pinter – Kasparov
Auxerre 1993
King's Indian Defense [E65]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗d3 0-0 6.♘ge2 c5 7.d5 e6 8.0-0 e×d5 9.c×d5 ♖e8 10.h3 ♘bd7 11.♘g3 a6 12.a4 ♖b8 13.a5 h5 14.♗g5 b5 15.a×b6 ♕×b6 16.♖a2 ♘e5 17.♗e2 ♘h7 18.♗e3 h4 19.♘h1 g5 20.♕d2 ♕d8 21.♕c2 ♘f8 22.♕c1 ♗f6 23.f3 ♘fg6 24.♘f2 ♖b6 25.♖d1 ♘f4 26.♗f1 ♘h5 27.♕c2 ♘g3 28.b3 ♖e7 29.♘b1 ♘g6 30.♘d2 ♘f4 31.♘c4 ♖b4 32.♘d3 ♘g6 33.♖a3 ♖c7 34.♕d2 ♖b8 35.e5 d×e5 36.d6 ♖c6 37.♘×c5 ♗f5 38.♕d5 ♖×c5 39.♕×c5 e4 40.f×e4 ♗×e4 41.♕c7 ♘f4 42.♕×d8+ ♗×d8 43.♗×f4 g×f4 44.♗d3 ♗b7 45.♖e1 ♗f6 46.d7 ♗c6 47.♖e8+ ♖×e8 48.d×e8♕+ ♗×e8 49.♖×a6 ♗d4+ 50.♔h2 ♗b5 51.♖d6 ♗f2 52.♖d8+ ♔g7 53.b4 f5 54.♖b8 ♗a4 55.♘d2 ♔f6 56.♖a8 ♗d7 57.b5 ♔e7 58.♖a6 ♗e6 59.♖a4 ♗d5 60.♖a1 ♗e4 61.♗f1 ♔d6 62.♘f3 ♔c5 63.♖c1+ ♔b6 64.♗c4 ♔c5 65.♗f1+ ♔b6 66.♘e5 ♗d4 67.♘d7+ ♔a5 68.♖d1 ♘×f1+ 69.♖×f1 ♔×b5 70.♘f8 ♔c4 71.♘g6 ♗f6 72.♖×f4 ♗g5 73.♖f1 ♔d3 74.g3 ♔e2 75.♖a1 f4 76.♖a2+ ♔e3 77.♖a3+ ♔f2 78.g×f4 ♗h6 79.♖a2+ ♔f1 80.♖a1+ ♔f2 81.♖g1 ♗×g6 82.♖×g6 ♗×f4+ 83.♔h1 ♗g3 (D)

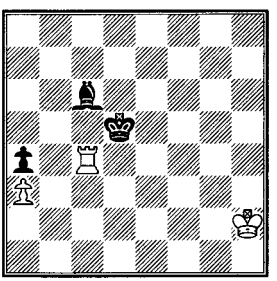


84.♖g4 ♔f1 85.♖g5 ♔f2 86.♖f5+ ♔e3 87.♔g2 ♔e4 88.♖f7 ♔d5 89.♖e7 ♔d6 90.♖e2 ♔d5 91.♔f3 ♔d6 92.♔g4 ♔d7 93.♔f5 ♔d6 94.♖e8 ♔d7 95.♖e6 ♔c7 96.♔e4 ♔d7 97.♔d5 ♔c7 98.♖e7+ ♔b6 99.♖f7 ♗h2 100.♖f2 ♗g3 101.♖c2 ♔b7 102.♖c6 ♗f4 103.♔c5 ♗g3 104.♔d5 ♗f4 105.♖c2 ♗g3 106.♔e6 ♔b6 107.♔d7 ♔b5 108.♖c6 ♗h2 109.♖c2 ♗g3 110.♔e6 ♔b6 111.♔f5 ♔b5 112.♔e4 ♔b6 113.♔f3 ♔b5 114.♔g4 ½-½

Of more interest is the next game. Just like in the lines above, the king was trapped in the vicinity of the pawns. Apparently, this should be less dangerous, because the king has more space available, but on the other hand the bishop's "good" diagonal is shorter!

(205) Kasparov – Yusupov
Linares 1993
Queen's Gambit Declined [D35]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗e7 4.c×d5 e×d5 5.♗f4 ♘f6 6.e3 ♗f5 7.♘ge2 0-0 8.♘g3 ♗e6 9.♗d3 c5 10.d×c5 ♗×c5 11.0-0 ♘c6 12.♖c1 ♗d6 13.♘h5 ♗e7 14.♘b5 ♘×h5 15.♕×h5 g6 16.♕f3 ♖c8 17.♖fd1 ♕d7 18.h3 ♖fd8 19.♕g3 ♘b4 20.♘c3 ♘×d3 21.♖×d3 ♗f5 22.♖d2 ♕e6 23.♖cd1 h5 24.h4 ♖c5 25.f3 ♕c6 26.e4 ♖×c3 27.b×c3 ♕b6+ 28.♔h2 d×e4 29.♖×d8+ ♗×d8 30.♗e3 ♕a5 31.♕b8 ♕c7+ 32.♕×c7 ♗×c7+ 33.♔g1 e×f3 34.g×f3 b6 35.♔f2 ♔f8 36.♖d4 ♔e7 37.♗f4 ♗×f4 38.♖×f4 ♔d6 39.♔e3 ♔c5 40.♖d4 ♗e6 41.a3 a5 42.♔e4 b5 43.♔e5 a4 44.f4 ♔c6 45.♔f6 ♔c5 46.♖b4 ♗c4 47.♔e7 ♗e6 48.♖e4 ♔d5 49.♖d4+ ♔c6 50.♔d8 ♗f5 51.♔e8 ♗e6 52.♔f8 ♔c5 53.♔g7 ♔c6 54.♔g8 ♔c5 55.♔f8 ♔c6 56.♔g7 ♔c5 57.♔h8 ♔c6 58.♔h7 ♔c5 59.♔h6 ♗f5 60.♔g5 ♗e6 61.♔f6 ♔c6 62.f5 ♗×f5 63.♔×f7 ♔c5 64.♔f6 ♗c2 65.♔e7 ♗f5 66.♔d8 ♔c6 67.♖f4 ♔d6 68.♖b4 ♔c5 69.♔c7 ♗d3 70.♖d4 ♗e2 71.♔b7 ♗f1 72.♔a7 ♗e2 73.♖e4 ♗d3 74.♖b4 ♗c4 75.♔a6 ♔d5 76.♔a5 ♔e5 77.♖b1 g5 78.h×g5 ♔f5 79.♖g1 ♔g6 80.♔b4 h4 81.♔c5 h3 82.♔d4 ♗e6 83.♔e5 ♗d7 84.♔f4 ♗c6 85.♔g3 ♔×g5 86.♖d1 h2 87.♔×h2 ♔f4 88.c4 b×c4 89.♖d4+ ♔e5 90.♖×c4 ♔d5 (D)



91.♖b4 ♔c5

The black king cannot escape to queenside, at least not before he places his bishop on b3.

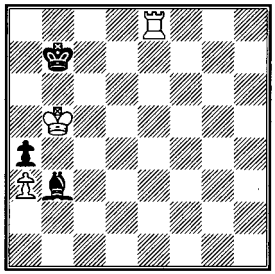
92.♔g3 ♗b5 93.♔f4 ♔b6 94.♔e3 ♔a5 95.♔d4 ♗e2 96.♖b1 ♗h5 97.♖e1 ♗f7 98.♔c5 ♗b3 99.♖e8 ♔a6 100.♔c6 ♔a7 101.♔b5

101.♖e7+ ♔b8 (101...♔a6 102.♔c5 and the king is boxed) 102.♖c7 was rather simple.

101...♔b7! (D)

101...♗d1?! 102.♖e7+ ♔b8 103.♔b6 ♔c8 104.♖e4 ♗b3 105.♖d4 creates *zugzwang*.

102.♖e7+?



Letting the king out of the box. 102.♖d8 ♔c7 103.♖d4 is secure.

102...♔c8

Now it's a draw...

103.♔c6 ♔d8 104.♖d7+

104.♖e2 ♗c4 105.♖e4 ♗b3=

104...♔e8 105.♔c7 ♗c2 106.♖d2 ♗b3 107.♖e2+ ♔f7 108.♔d6 ♗c4 109.♖e7+ ♔f8 110.♖e4 ♗b3 111.♔d7 ♔f7 112.♖f4+ ♔g6 113.♔d6 ♔g5 114.♔e5 ♔g6 115.♖f3 ♔g7 116.♖f6 ♗c4 117.♔f5 ♗b3 118.♔g5 ♗c2 ½-½

Curiously, the evaluation remains the same: the side with a rook should win by successive *zugzwang* positions. For a while, Kasparov conducted his technique in the best way, but then let the enemy king escape, with an inevitable draw...

Conclusion

According to grandmaster Alexander Baburin, the defending side should avoid two main situations:

1. His king is locked in the low right corner (f2/f7, f1/f8, g2/g7, etc) with the rook cutting it off along the e-file.

2. His king is above the fourth (fifth) rank and is left of the e-file (i.e., the white king is on d5, while Black has a rook on e4).

So, in conclusion we could create a detailed guide of important factors:

1. The stronger side wants to sacrifice the exchange back, when the defending king is too far away.

2. Therefore the defending side must not allow his king to be driven beyond the c- or f-file.

3. The defending side should not move his king above the fourth (fifth) rank either.

4. Usually the defending side should place his king in diagonal opposition to the enemy king (i.e., ♔c2 vs. ♔e4).

5. The defending side does not want his king to be too close to his pawn either – there the king will be in real danger.

The Square

Concept

This title is perhaps misleading as this survey is focused on the ending of ♖+♗+♙ vs. ♗+♘+♙, when there are no passed pawns and the bishops are of opposite colors. But as the usual, the winning maneuver is the rook's square move, commonly called "the square!"

This ending at first sight looks rather easy, but there are many difficulties. The main plan is first of all to drive the defending king to (or near) the back rank. Then there are basically three winning plans:

1. To win the opponent's pawn. This is easier said than done, as the defending side should place his bishop on the same color square as the pawn. If the stronger side exchanges his rook for the opponent's bishop and pawn, a draw usually ensues.

2. To isolate and win the knight or to exchange the opponent's two minor

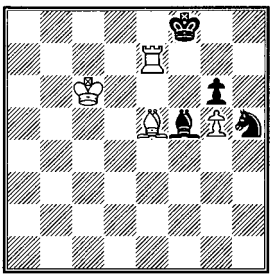
pieces for the rook. This is the case most often encountered, as the stronger side usually succeeds in efficiently restricting the knight.

3. To isolate the defending king from its pieces and create mating nets. This is another good case, as the knight usually finds shelter on the edge of the board, where it can't assist its king.

Let's start with a famous game:

(206) Kasparov – Karpov
Lyon 1990
Scotch Game [C45]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 e×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘×c6 b×c6 6.e5 ♕e7 7.♕e2 ♘d5 8.c4 ♘b6 9.♘d2 ♕e6 10.b3 a5 11.♗b2 ♗b4 12.a3 ♗×d2+ 13.♕×d2 d5 14.c×d5 c×d5 15.♖c1 0-0 16.♖×c7 ♕g6 17.f3 ♗f5 18.g4 ♗b1 19.♗b5 ♖ac8 20.♖×c8 ♖×c8 21.0-0 h5 22.h3 h×g4 23.h×g4 ♗c2 24.♕d4 ♕e6 25.♖f2 ♖c7 26.♖h2 ♘d7 27.b4 a×b4 28.a×b4 ♘f8 29.♗f1 ♗b3 30.♗d3 ♗c4 31.♗f5 ♕e7 32.♕d2 ♖c6 33.♗d4 ♖a6 34.♗b1 ♖a3 35.♖h3 ♖b3 36.♗c2 ♕×b4 37.♕f2 ♘g6 38.e6 ♖b1+ 39.♗×b1 ♕×b1+ 40.♔h2 f×e6 41.♕b2 ♕×b2+ 42.♗×b2 ♘f4 43.♖h4 ♘d3 44.♗c3 e5 45.♔g3 d4 46.♗d2 ♗d5 47.♖h5 ♔f7 48.♗a5 ♔e6 49.♖h8 ♘b2 50.♖e8+ ♔d6 51.♗b4+ ♔c6 52.♖c8+ ♔d7 53.♖c5 ♔e6 54.♖c7 g6 55.♖e7+ ♔f6 56.♖d7 ♗a2 57.♖a7 ♗c4 58.♗a5 ♗d3 59.f4 e×f4+ 60.♔×f4 ♗c2 61.♖a6+ ♔f7 62.♔e5 ♘d3+ 63.♔×d4 ♘f2 64.g5 ♗f5 65.♗d2 ♔e7 66.♔d5 ♘e4 67.♖a7+ ♔e8 68.♗e3 ♘c3+ 69.♔e5 ♔d8 70.♗b6+ ♔e8 71.♖c7 ♘e4 72.♗e3 ♘g3 73.♗f4 ♘h5 74.♖a7 ♔f8 75.♗h2 ♘g7 76.♗g1 ♘h5 77.♗c5+ ♔g8 78.♔d6 ♔f8 79.♗d4 ♗g4 80.♗e5 ♗f5 81.♖h7 ♔g8 82.♖c7 ♔f8 83.♔c6 ♔g8 84.♖e7 ♔f8 85.♗d6 ♔g8 86.♖e8+ ♔f7 87.♖e7+ ♔g8 88.♗e5 ♔f8 (D)



Here the game was adjourned for the second time. Judging from everything, the position is a winning one for White, and in end the logic of chess triumphed. To win the game, Kasparov has to walk his king to the d8-square. He can only do it by having his rook moving around a magical square which is described by a7, a3, e3 and e7 squares.

89.♖a7!

Drawing one side of the square.

89...♗g4 90.♔d6 ♗h3

The alternative is 90...♗f5 91.♖a3 ♔e8 (91...♔f7 92.♖e3 ♗c2 [92...♗e6 93.♔c7 ♔e7 94.♗b2! ♘f4 95.♗a3+ ♔f7 96.♖f3+– ; 92...♗g4 93.♔c7 ♔e6 94.♗h2+ ♔f7 (94...♔d5 95.♖e7 ♗f5 96.♔d8 ♗c2 97.♔e8+–) 95.♔d8 ♗e6 (95...♘g7 96.♖e7+ ♔f8 97.♗d6 ♔g8 98.♗e5 ♘e6+ 99.♔e8 ♗f5 100.♖b7+–) 96.♖a3 ♘g7 97.♖a7+ ♔g8 98.♔e7 +-] 93.♔d7 ♗a4+ 94.♔d8 ♔e6 95.♗h2+ ♔d5 [95...♔f5 96.♖e5+ ♔g4 97.♖e4+ +–] 96.♔e7 ♔d4 97.♖a3+–) 92.♖e3 ♔f7 93.♔c7 ♗e6 (93...♔e6 94.♗h2+ ♔d5 95.♖e7 ♗c2 96.♔d8 ♗a4 97.♖e5+ ♔d4 98.♖e6 ♗c2 99.♔e7+–) 94.♔d8 ♗d5 95.♗b2 ♘f4 96.♖e7+ ♔g8 (96...♔f8 97.♗a3 ♔g8 98.♖e8+ ♔g7 99.♔e7 +-) 97.♖a7

♘d3 98.♗d4 ♔f8 99.♖d7 ♗c4 100.♖d6+–.

91.♖a3!

The second side of the square is born. But why has the rook landed on the a3-square? It prevents the black knight from jumping to the g3-square.

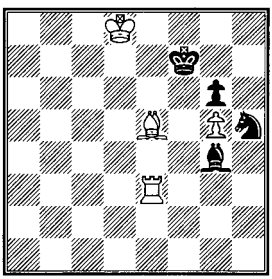
91...♗g4 92.♖e3!

The rook draws the third side of the square, preparing the white king's journey to d8. Now nothing can prevent the white king from making its way into the enemy position.

92...♗f5 93.♔c7 ♔f7 94.♔d8

The king's journey is over and White drives the black king from the f-file.

94...♗g4 (D)



95.♗b2!

Kasparov makes an important bishop move precisely at the moment when the black knight cannot move. It opens the road for the rook to return to the e7-square.

95...♗e6

After 95...♘f4 96.♖e7+ ♔f8 97.♗a3 ♔g8 98.♖e4 ♘e6+ 99.♔e7, Black loses one of his pieces.

96.♗c3!

An accurate waiting move which puts Black in *zugzwang*.

96...♗f5

96...♘f4? 97.♖f3+–

97.♖e7+

Returning where it all began, the rook finishes the square journey.

97...♔f8 98.♗e5

The domination is complete: the knight on the edge has no moves. White can easily force the black king to the corner.

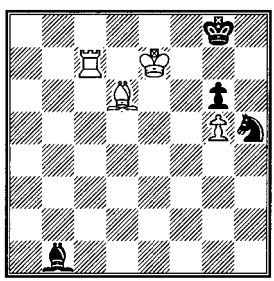
98...♗d3 99.♖a7 ♗e4 100.♖c7

Kasparov is looking for a free square on the 8th rank for his rook. It was possible to play 100.♗d6+ ♔g8 101.♔e7 ♘g7 102.♗e5+– directly.

100...♗b1

After 100...♗f5 good is 101.♗d6+ ♔g8 102.♔e7 ♘g7 103.♗e5+–.

101.♗d6+ ♔g8 102.♔e7 (D)



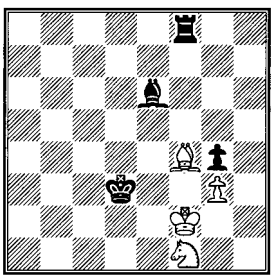
And Black resigned as after 102...♘g7 103.♖c8+ ♔h7 104.♗e5 ♘f5+ 105.♔f8 he has no defense against 106.Rc7+. **1–0**

A broader square maneuver can be seen in the next example. Although it was under more favorable circumstances, it was still the only correct treatment:

(207) Westenberger – Heinzel
Germany 1988
Sicilian Defense [B23]

1.e4 c5 2.♘c3 e6 3.♘ge2 ♘c6 4.g3 d5 5.e×d5 e×d5 6.♗g2 d4 7.♘b1 ♗d6 8.d3 ♗g4 9.h3 ♗h5 10.♘d2 f5 11.♘f3 ♘ge7 12.0-0 0-0 13.c3 ♕d7 14.c×d4 c×d4 15.♕b3+ ♗f7 16.♕a4 ♗c5 17.♗d2 ♖ad8 18.♖fc1 ♗b6 19.b4 ♘g6 20.♘f4 ♘ce5 21.♕×d7 ♖×d7

22.♘×e5 ♘×e5 23.h4 g6 24.a4 ♔g7 25.b5 h6 26.♗b4 ♖e8 27.a5 ♗d8 28.a6 b×a6 29.♗c6 ♘×c6 30.b×c6 ♖c7 31.♗d6 ♖c8 32.♖×a6 g5 33.h×g5 h×g5 34.♘g2 ♖e6 35.♗c5 ♗f6 36.♗×a7 ♗e8 37.♖a5 ♖e×c6 38.♖×c6 ♖×c6 39.♖×f5 ♖c1+ 40.♔h2 ♖d1 41.f4 g4 42.♖c5 ♖×d3 43.f5 ♖c3 44.♘f4 ♔f7 45.♖d5 ♖c2+ 46.♔g1 ♗c6 47.♖×d4 ♗×d4+ 48.♗×d4 ♗b5 49.f6 ♗c4 50.♗e5 ♔e8 51.♘g6 ♗f7 52.♘f4 ♔d7 53.♔f1 ♔c6 54.♔e1 ♔c5 55.♘d3+ ♔c4 56.♘f4 ♖a2 57.♔f1 ♖a5 58.♗c7 ♖a1+ 59.♔f2 ♔d4 60.♘e2+ ♔d3 61.♘f4+ ♔e4 62.♘g2 ♖a6 63.♗f4 ♖×f6 64.♘e3 ♗e6 65.♘f1 ♖f8 66.♘d2+ ♔d3 67.♘f1 (D)



Here the white knight is not protected by its pawn, so the task is easier. First Black activates his rook, very similar to the previous example.

67...♖a8 68.♘d2 ♖a4 69.♗g5 ♗d5

The knight is fully dominated by the black bishop.

70.♔e1 ♖a2 71.♗f4 ♖a1+ 72.♔f2 ♖d1

Black's plan is first to drive the white knight away from the d2-square from where it controls the important f3-square.

73.♘f1 ♗f3 74.♗g5 ♗e2 75.♘e3 ♖a1 76.♗f4

If White were to try to place his knight on h4 with 76.♘g2? a nasty surprise would await: 76...♖f1 ✱.

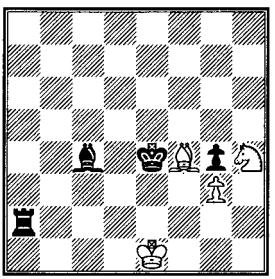
76...♖a2

Mission accomplished. Now the second phase begins.

77.♔e1 ♔e4!

Black allows the knight to go to h4, as he has calculated that the white king cannot go to the kingside.

78.♘g2 ♗c4 79.♘h4 (D)



So now we have a nearly identical case as the first example.

79...♖e2+! 80.♔d1

But here it is easier for Black, as the white king cannot hide on the kingside: 80.♔f1?! ♖h2+ 81.♔g1 ♖×h4 −+.

80...♔d3!

Mating threats are in the air, as the white pieces cannot be helpful by protecting their king.

81.♘g6 ♗b3+ 82.♔c1 ♖c2+ 83.♔b1 ♗a2+! 84.♔a1 ♔c3 85.♘e5 ♖g2

Quicker was 85...♗d5 86.♘d7 ♔b3 87.♗e3 ♖b2 88.♘f6 ♖h2 89.♔b1 ♖h1+ 90.♗c1 ♗c4.

86.♘d7 ♗e6 87.♗e5+ ♔c2

And White resigned as mate is near: 88.♗d4 ♖d2. **0-1**

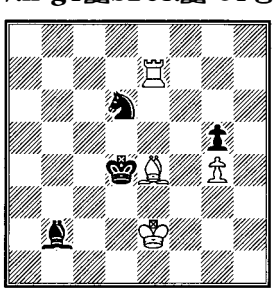
The final example shows the way that the defending king can be pushed back and how the knight can be restricted and eventually lost!

(208) Azmaiparashvili – Romero Holmes

Leon 1994

King's Indian Defense [E94]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♘f3 0-0 6.♗e2 e5 7.♗e3 ♘bd7 8.0-0 c6 9.d5 c5 10.♘e1 ♔h8 11.♘d3 ♘g8 12.♘b5 ♘df6 13.♘×d6 ♕×d6 14.♗×c5 ♕c7 15.♗×f8 ♗×f8 16.c5 ♘×e4 17.♖c1 f5 18.d6 ♕g7 19.♖e1 ♘g5 20.b4 ♗e6 21.♕a4 ♘f7 22.♗f1 g5 23.b5 e4 24.b6 a5 25.c6 ♘×d6 26.c×b7 ♕×b7 27.♕d4+ ♕g7 28.♘e5 ♘f6 29.♖c7 ♘d7 30.♘c6 ♘e8 31.♖a7 ♖c8 32.♕×g7+ ♘×g7 33.♖×d7 ♗×d7 34.b7 ♖e8 35.b8♕ ♖×b8 36.♘×b8 ♗e6 37.a4 ♗b3 38.♖c1 ♗×a4 39.♖c8 ♘e8 40.♘c6 ♗×c6 41.♖×c6 ♔g7 42.♖e6 ♘d6 43.♖e5 h5 44.♖×a5 h4 45.h3 ♔f6 46.♗e2 ♗e7 47.♗d1 ♗d8 48.♖d5 ♗e7 49.♗b3 ♗f8 50.♔f1 ♘b7 51.♗c4 ♘d6 52.♗a2 ♘f7 53.♖a5 ♘d6 54.♔e2 ♗e7 55.♗b3 ♗d8 56.♖c5 ♗e7 57.♖a5 ♗d8 58.♖d5 ♔e6 59.g4 h×g3 60.f×g3 ♔d7 61.♖e5 ♗f6 62.♗a4+ ♔c7 63.♖e6 ♗d4 64.♖e7+ ♔b6 65.♗c2 ♔c5 66.g4 f×g4 67.h×g4 ♗b2 68.♗×e4 ♔d4 (D)

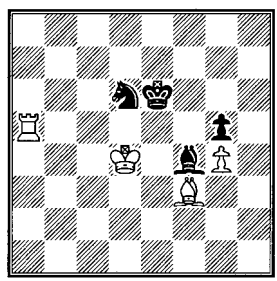


The ending is very young still, as much work must be done – the black king has to be pushed back.

69.♗f5 ♗c1 70.♔d1 ♗f4 71.♔c2 ♗e5 72.♗d3 ♘e4 73.♗b5 ♘d6 74.♗c6 ♘c4 75.♗f3 ♘d6 76.♔d2 ♘c4+ 77.♔e2 ♘d6 78.♖a7!

The first step of the square. The black king will be only pushed back with the help of the rook.

78...♗f4 79.♖a5 ♘f7 80.♖a4+ ♔e5 81.♔d3 ♘d6 82.♖a5+ ♔f6 83.♔d4 ♔e6 (D)



84.♗d5+! ♔f6 85.♗b3

And the bishop is placed on the "correct" diagonal; it was not threatening anything on the h1-a8 diagonal.

85...♗g3 86.♔d5 ♗f4 87.♖a1! ♘b5 88.♖e1

The rook has made its usual square (e7-a7-a1-e1). Now control of the e6-square is important to drive back the king, but also others squares, such as e8, can be helpful.

88...♘c7+ 89.♔c6 ♗g3 90.♖e2 ♗f4 91.♗c4!

Fully dominating the knight.

91...♗g3 92.♔d7 ♗f4 93.♖e7

And Black resigned as the knight will be lost. **1-0**

Conclusion

The ending is won but it is necessary to work things out with concrete plans. The only problem to be concerned with is the 50-move rule, as the pawns are blocked and both opponents are usually facing time trouble in the last stages of the game!

Queen vs. Rook

Concept

This ending of queen versus rook looks like an easy one, but there are many details to be studied and applied. The queen wins, but the main obstacle is the 50-move rule and the limited time to think that both opponents have at their disposal, as in these late phases of the game they have usually consumed most of the time and they live on the 30-seconds/per move increment.

In this survey, we will borrow from Derek Grimmell's excellent study of this ending in his *Queen versus Rook Endgame Training Database* (ChessBase 2008). It is probably the most accurate work I have ever seen in this subject and I found it very helpful. But let's examine some important concepts, starting with the ways to defend:

1. *Close defenses:* In which the king and rook stay within two squares of each other for mutual support and defense.

2. *Distant defenses:* In which the rook separates from the king while remaining no more than one rank or file away so as to rejoin it if needed.

3. *Cut-off defenses:* In which the rook sets up a barrier to the white king's progress and the black king supports this barrier from some distance.

4. *Harassment defenses:* In which the rook hides behind the white king and threatens a series of harassing checks from either of two directions.

And how does the queen win this ending?

1. *By giving mate:* Although this seems obvious, the queen has several mating patterns and threats available in this ending which almost never appear in any other type of position.

We will call these "microwave mates" because their scarcity in other positions makes it likely that a defender will overlook them, allowing the queen a one-move mate with a delightful surprise quality (for the attacker).

2. *By forking the rook:* The rook must often separate from the king because of the suffocating presence of the opposing pieces. When this happens, either the queen must find a way to fork the rook, or it must force the rook to return to its king and endure the process of suffocation.

Several standard techniques make these goals simpler to achieve. They improve the queen's ability to fork the rook. In the sample games, the student will see several cases in which strong international players missed one-move forks, or demonstrated a lack of familiarity with the proper forking techniques.

3. *By creating a* zugzwang *position:* A well-prepared defender can avoid both of the first dangers by proper positioning. The stronger side must be familiar with a number of *zugzwang* positions. The Philidor Position is the most well-known.

And finally, how does the rook draw this ending?

1. *By stalemate tricks:* The queen's main strategy is to force the rook toward the edge of the board to create *zugzwang* (although there are a few *zugzwang* positions that can occur in the center of the board).

When this happens, an over-eager attacker can easily fall into a stalemate trap. Even when the attacker avoids actual stalemate, the defender can often prolong the defense through awareness of stalemate defenses, times when it is safe to place the undefended rook

on an attacked square because capturing the rook would produce stalemate.

Again, we will see cases in which international players missed stalemate defenses and missed potential draws as a result.

2. *By skewer or pin of the queen:* We understand that this ending is likely to occur late in a playing session. It is easy for a fatigued attacker, facing stubborn defense, to fall into a pin or skewer of the queen. In rare circumstances, this can allow the rook to win.

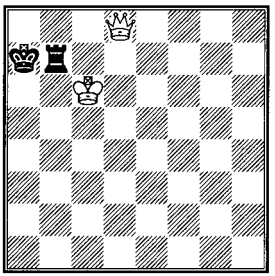
3. *By the 50-move rule:* This is the weaker side's real defensive strength. Let us be clear about one fact: against a skilled and knowledgeable attacker, even the best defense will lose well short of the 50-move rule. And yet for a skilled and knowledgeable defender, this ending is much easier to defend than it is to win. Black's two main ways of reaching the 50-move rule are:

3.1. *By confusing the opponent:* There are at least five types of positions in this course in which the weaker side can choose an objectively inferior defense that sets the attacker tremendous problems. An unprepared attacker is virtually certain to choose the wrong approach and lose time.

3.2. *By superior knowledge:* There are yet more positions in which superior knowledge enables the defender to recognize weak moves and exploit them to slip away along the edge of the board or toward the center, and thus prolong resistance. The rule of thumb in this ending is that two escapes should draw; three escapes will draw.

Our first example is the most crucial of the survey:

(209) The Philidor Position (D)



This is the most important position to know; the so called "Philidor Position." In this standard position, Black must be on move.

1...♖h7

All alternatives also lose: 1...♔a6 2.♕c8; 1...♖b8 2.♕a5#; 1...♖b4 2.♕a5+; 1...♖b3 2.♕d4+ ♔b8 3.♕f4+ ♔a7 (3...♔c8 4.♕f8#) 4.♕a4+; 1...♖b2 2.♕d4+; 1...♖b1 2.♕d4+ ♔b8 3.♕f4+ ♔a8 4.♕f8+ ♔a7 5.♕f2+ ♔b8 6.♕h2+ ♔a7 7.♕a2+; 1...♖f7 2.♕d4+ ♔b8 (2...♔a8 3.♕a1+) 3.♕b2+ ♔a8 4.♕a2+; 1...♖g7 2.♕d4+.

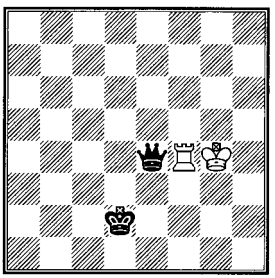
2.♕a5+ ♔b8 3.♕b4+ ♔a7 4.♕a3+ ♔b8 5.♕b3+ ♔a7 6.♕a2+ ♔b8 7.♕g8+ 1-0

But what about in practice? Theory is all well and good but what happens when we get to a practical game? Let's examine an example between two great and well-known players:

(210) Gelfand – Svidler
Moscow 2001
Catalan Opening [E05]

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.d4 d5 4.g3 ♗e7 5.♗g2 0-0 6.0-0 d×c4 7.♕c2 a6 8.a4 ♗d7 9.♕×c4 ♗c6 10.♗g5 ♗d5 11.♕d3 ♗e4 12.♕e3 ♘bd7 13.♘c3 ♗c6 14.♕d3 h6 15.♗×f6 ♘×f6 16.e4 b6 17.♖fd1 ♗b7 18.d5 ♗c5 19.♘e5 e×d5 20.♘×d5 ♘×d5 21.e×d5 ♕f6

22.♘d7 ♕×f2+ 23.♔h1 ♖fd8 24.♖f1 ♕e3 25.♕f5 ♕e7 26.♘×c5 b×c5 27.♖ae1 ♕d7 28.♕×d7 ♖×d7 29.♖c1 ♗×d5 30.♖×c5 ♗×g2+ 31.♔×g2 ♖d2+ 32.♖f2 ♖×f2+ 33.♔×f2 ♖b8 34.♖c2 ♖b4 35.♔e3 ♖×a4 36.♖×c7 ♖b4 37.♖c2 a5 38.♔d2 a4 39.♖c8+ ♔h7 40.♔c3 ♖b3+ 41.♔c2 ♖f3 42.♖a8 ♖f2+ 43.♔c3 ♖×h2 44.♖×a4 ♖h3 45.b4 ♖×g3+ 46.♔c4 h5 47.♖a1 h4 48.b5 ♖e3 49.b6 ♖e8 50.b7 ♖b8 51.♖b1 g5 52.♔d5 h3 53.♔e4 h2 54.♔f5 ♖×b7 55.♖h1 ♖b2 56.♔×g5 ♔g7 57.♔g4 ♔g6 58.♔g3 ♔g5 59.♖f1 f5 60.♔h3 ♖f2 61.♖a1 ♖e2 62.♖h1 ♔f4 63.♖f1+ ♔e4 64.♔g3 ♔e5 65.♖a1 f4+ 66.♔f3 ♖a2 67.♖h1 ♖b2 68.♔g4 ♖f2 69.♔h3 ♔e4 70.♖e1+ ♔d3 71.♖a1 ♖d2 72.♖a3+ ♔c2 73.♖a2+ ♔b1 74.♖×d2 h1♕+ 75.♔g4 ♔c1 76.♖d3 ♕e4 77.♖f3 ♔d2 78.♖×f4(D)



Let's look at a well-known example of what a tenacious defender can do against a super-grandmaster.

78...♕g6+ 79.♔f3 ♔d3 80.♔f2 ♕g5

80...♕c6 is a bit better, although it doesn't make a big difference. But with the 50-move rule every move counts.

81.♔f3 ♕g1

81...♕g6! is more effective, because Black is driving White toward the first rank, rather than the eighth, and White is already closer to the first than the eighth. Knowing when and how to go either direction can save a great deal of trouble in this ending.

82.♖f5 ♕e3+ 83.♔g4 ♔e4! 84.♖f8 ♕g1+ 85.♔h5?

85.♔h4 is best, although Black mates in 18 moves starting with 85...♕c5.

85...♕g7?

Overlooking the decisive 85...♕c5+. This often happens to attackers!

86.♖f1 ♕e5+

86...♕g3 here or in the next moves is correct, pushing the king to the shorter edge of the board.

87.♔g4 ♕e6+ 88.♔g5 ♕g8+ 89.♔h4

If 89.♔h5 then 89...♕g3.

89...♕g6! 90.♔h3

90.♖f2 is a bit better defense, although after 90...♕d6 Black mates in 18.

90...♔e3

90...♕g5! pushing the king back is the right concept.

91.♔h4 ♕h7+ 92.♔g3?!

92.♔g5! saves White at least seven moves.

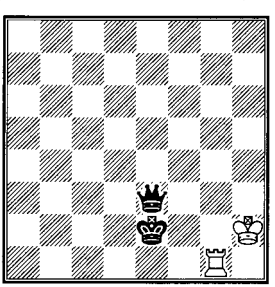
92...♕g8+ 93.♔h3

93.♔h4?! ♕c4+

93...♕g5! 94.♔h2 ♔e2

Not a mistake, but 94...♕g4 should be the usual restriction method!

95.♖g1 ♕f4+ 96.♔h3 ♕h6+ 97.♔g3 ♕e3+ 98.♔h2 (D)



98...♔f2?!

98...♕d4! puts White in *zugzwang* and mates soon: 99.♖g3 ♔f2 100.♖g2+ ♔f1 101.♔h3 ♕h8+.

99.♖g2+ ♔f1 100.♖g4

Now Black has lost all the ground he had gained and more.

100...♕e5+ 101.♔h3 ♔f2 102.♔h4 ♔f3?!

This is an especially difficult position to solve at the board. Yet this is a common pattern; corrected was 102...♕h2+! 103.♔g5 ♔f3. Not only does it work here, but it is usually the best procedure everywhere except the corner of the board.

103.♖g6!

Gelfand knows his defensive tactics in ♕v♖ endings. Svidler has gained no ground since move 85.

103...♕e7+ 104.♔h5 ♔f4 105.♔h6?!

White misses the stalemate trick 105.♖f6+! which would already come close to guaranteeing a draw by the 50-move rule. The attacker must be very careful about approaching the defender on the (relative) sixth rank.

105...♕h4+

105...♔f5! mates in 12.

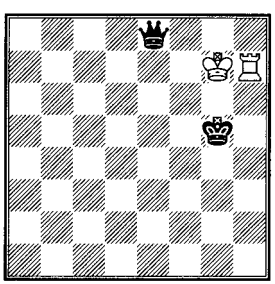
106.♔g7 ♔f5!

See the comment to the 102nd move.

107.♖h6 ♕e7+ 108.♔g8 ♔g5

108...♕d7 109.♔f8 ♔g5 is the killing sequence.

109.♖h7 ♕e8+ 110.♔g7 (D)



110...♕e5+

110...♕e4 is the most precise.

111.♔f7 ♕d5+ 112.♔g7 ♕d6

112...♕e4!

113.♔g8 ♔g6 114.♖g7+ ♔f6 115.♖f7+ ♔e6 116.♔g7 ♕g3+

116...♕e5+! 117.♔g8 ♕d5 forces the Philidor Position in about five moves.

117.♔f8 ♕h4 118.♔g8 ♕g5+

Black should force the position in the comments of the 116th move: 118...♕d8+ 119.♖f8 (119.♔g7 ♕g5+ 120.♔f8 ♕h5!) 119...♕d4 120.♖f7 ♕d5.

119.♖g7 ♕d8+ 120.♔h7 ♕h4+ 121.♔g8 ♕h5 122.♖a7

It is already too late to capture the rook before the 50-move rule applies. Gelfand's play suggests that he had already made a deep study of the queen versus rook endgame.

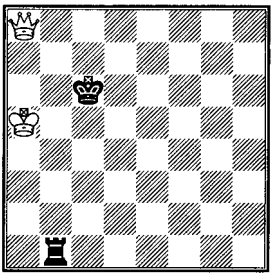
122...♕g6+ 123.♔h8 ♕f6+ 124.♖g7 ♕h6+ 125.♔g8 ♕h2 126.♖g6+ ♔e7 127.♖g7+ ♔e8 128.♖g6 ♕h5 129.♔g7 ♔e7 ½-½

What can we conclude from this game? Svidler is clearly a great chessplayer. He missed a few immediate opportunities such as the fork at move 85, but the main problem was that he was unable to solve a concrete problem at the board several times. In other words, he could force Gelfand back until a win was there for the taking, but did not know the dozen or so basic but non-obvious ways to deliver the killing blow.

By contrast, Gelfand gave the impression of knowing which positions give the queen the greatest difficulty. He seemed to steer towards these, even when they were objectively less good. Remember his example of tenacious defense.

(211) Ivanchuk – Lautier
Horgen 1995
Sicilian Defense [B48]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 e6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘c6 5.♘c3 ♕c7 6.♗e3 a6 7.♗d3 ♘f6 8.0-0 ♘e5 9.h3 ♗c5 10.♔h1 d6 11.f4 ♘ed7 12.♕e1 ♕b6 13.♘a4 ♕b4 14.♕×b4 ♗×b4 15.♘b3 b5 16.♘b6 ♘×b6 17.♗×b6 ♘d7 18.♗d4 e5 19.c3 ♗c5 20.f×e5 ♗×d4 21.c×d4 d×e5 22.d5 ♘f6 23.♘c5 ♔e7 24.a4 ♗d7 25.a5 ♖hc8 26.b4 ♖c7 27.♖f3 ♗e8 28.♗e2 ♘d7 29.♖c3 ♔d6 30.♖ac1 ♖aa7 31.♔g1 ♘f6 32.♔f2 ♗d7 33.♖f3 ♗c8 34.♔e3 ♘e8 35.♖cf1 f6 36.♖g3 ♔e7 37.♗h5 g6 38.♗g4 ♘d6 39.♗×c8 ♖×c8 40.♖gf3 ♖f8 41.g4 ♖f7 42.♔d3 ♖a8 43.♖3f2 ♖ff8 44.h4 ♖f7 45.♖f3 ♖c8 46.♖1f2 ♖c7 47.h5 g×h5 48.g×h5 f5 49.e×f5 e4+ 50.♘×e4 ♘×e4 51.♖e3 ♔d6 52.♖×e4 ♔×d5 53.f6 ♔d6 54.♖f5 ♖c6 55.♔d4 ♖c4+ 56.♔e3 ♖c6 57.♔d4 ♖c4+ 58.♔e3 ♖c6 59.♔f4 h6 60.♖d4+ ♔e6 61.♖e4+ ♔d6 62.♔f3 ♖c3+ 63.♔g4 ♖c8 64.♖f1 ♖g8+ 65.♔h4 ♖gf8 66.♖d1+ ♔c7 67.♖e7+ ♖×e7 68.f×e7 ♖f4+ 69.♔g3 ♖e4 70.♖f1 ♔d7 71.♖f6 ♔×e7 72.♖×h6 ♖×b4 73.♖×a6 ♖a4 74.♖a7+ ♔f8 75.a6 ♔g8 76.h6 ♔h8 77.♔f3 b4 78.♔e4 b3+ 79.♔d3 b2 80.♔c2 ♖b4 81.♔b1 ♖b6 82.h7 ♖b4 83.♖c7 ♖a4 84.♖c8+ ♔×h7 85.♖c6 ♖b4 86.a7 ♖a4 87.♖c7+ ♔g6 88.♔×b2 ♔f6 89.♔b3 ♖a1 90.♔b4 ♔e6 91.♔b5 ♔d6 92.♖c6+ ♔d5 93.♖a6 ♖b1+ 94.♔a5 ♔c5 95.♖c6+ ♔×c6 96.a8♕+ (D)



96...♔c7

96...♔c5 is equally good. More importantly, it creates the chance to get into "harassment" defenses, rather than moving at once to a "close defense."

97.♕a7+ ♖b7

97...♔c6 moving towards the center gives White more options to make mistakes.

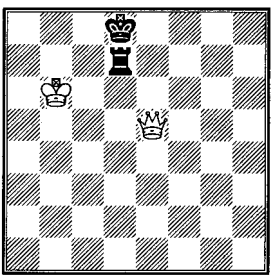
98.♕c5+ ♔b8

98...♔d8 is better, again moving towards the center: 99.♕f8+ ♔d7 100.♕a8 ♔c7 101.♕a6 ♔c8 (101...♔b8 102.♕e6! ♖a7+ 103.♔b6 ♖b7+ 104.♔c6 ♖c7+ 105.♔d6 ♖b7 106.♕e4 ♖b6+ 107.♔c5 ♖b7 108.♔c6 is a well-known method that we came across already in the previous game) 102.♕c6+ ♔b8 103.♕e6!.

99.♔a6 ♖d7 100.♕e5+!

Best! Ivanchuk seems to know this ending well.

100...♔c8 101.♔b6 ♔d8 (D)



102.♔c6?!

102.♕b8+! ♔e7 103.♔c6 is precise.

102...♖f7

Lautier continues to fall back using his chances. Ivanchuk is further

from mate than he was on move 95.

103.♕g5+ ♔e8 104.♔d6 ♔f8?!

Black misses the fact that the too-near king permits the stalemate defense 104...♖f6+! 105.♔d5 ♖f7 getting off the back rank; again Ivanchuk is no closer to mate than when he started. The best move is very hard for White to find at the board.

105.♔e6

Again a typical position, which against the edge of the board is very bad for Black.

105...♖h7

Now it's a trivial win and Ivanchuk finishes the job smoothly. If 105...♖b7 then 106.♕c5+ ♔g7 107.♕d4+ ♔g8 108.♔f6! and with the checking square under control; Black is doomed.

106.♕f6+ ♔g8 107.♕g6+

107.♕d8+ ♔g7 108.♕e7+ ♔g8 (108...♔g6 109.♕f6+ ♔h5 110.♔f5) 109.♕e8+ ♔g7 110.♕f7+ ♔h6 111.♕f6+ ♔h5 112.♔f5

107...♖g7 108.♕e8+ ♔h7 109.♔f6

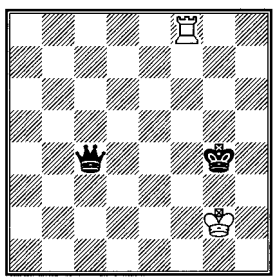
The Philidor Position.

109...♖g4 110.♕h5+ ♔g8 111.♕×g4+ 1-0

So in fact, late in a session and with little time left on the clock, even the strongest players in the world overlook basic patterns that either prolong the defense, or end all resistance.

(212) Volokitin – Khismatullin
Plovdiv 2008
Philidor's Defense [C41]

1.e4 d6 2.d4 ♘f6 3.♘c3 e5 4.♘f3 ♘bd7 5.♗c4 ♗e7 6.0-0 0-0 7.♖e1 c6 8.a4 b6 9.b3 a6 10.d5 c×d5 11.♘×d5 ♘×d5 12.♕×d5 ♕c7 13.♕×a8 ♗b7 14.♕a7 ♖a8 15.♕×b7 ♕×b7 16.♗d5 ♕a7 17.♗×a8 ♕×a8 18.♗a3 ♕c6 19.♖ad1 b5 20.a×b5 a×b5 21.♖d2 g6 22.♗b4 ♔g7 23.h3 ♘c5 24.♗×c5 ♕×c5 25.♖de2 ♗d8 26.♖d1 ♗b6 27.♖d5 ♕c6 28.♖ed2 ♗c5 29.c3 b4 30.c4 ♕a8 31.♘×e5 d×e5 32.♖×c5 ♕×e4 33.♖cd5 ♕b1+ 34.♔h2 e4 35.♖e5 ♕c1 36.♖ed5 ♕b1 37.♖5d4 e3 38.f×e3 ♕×b3 39.♖2d3 ♕c2 40.♖d2 b3 41.♖d7 h5 42.c5 h4 43.e4 ♕×e4 44.♖f2 b2 45.♖d×f7+ ♔h6 46.♖f1 b1♕ 47.♖×b1 ♕×b1 48.c6 ♕c2 49.c7 g5 50.♔h1 ♔g6 51.♖f3 ♕×c7 52.♔g1 ♕e5 53.♔h1 ♕a1+ 54.♔h2 ♕c1 55.♖f2 ♕c7+ 56.♔h1 g4 57.h×g4 h3 58.♖f3 h×g2+ 59.♔×g2 ♔g5 60.♔h3 ♕h7+ 61.♔g3 ♕h4+ 62.♔g2 ♕e1 63.♖f8 ♕e4+ 64.♔h2 ♕e5+ 65.♔h3 ♕c3+ 66.♔g2 ♕c6+ 67.♔f1 ♕c4+ 68.♔g2 ♔×g4 (D)



69.♖f2 ♕d5+ 70.♔h2 ♕d4

A grandmaster knows a tremendous amount about chess, but not necessarily about this specific ending. Keeping the diagonal with 70...♕e4! puts White in immediate *zugzwang*.

71.♔g2 ♕d3

Again 71...♕d1 was more precise.

72.♔g1 ♔g3 73.♖g2+ ♔f3 74.♖f2+ ♔e3 75.♖g2 ♕d4 76.♖g3+ ♔e2+?!

76...♔f4+! forces the Philidor Po-

sition by a well-worn path.

77.♔g2 ♕e4+ 78.♔g1

78.♔h3 is more stubborn: 78...♕h1+ 79.♔g4 ♔f2 and mate in 13.

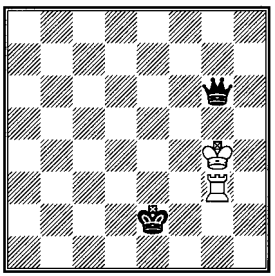
78...♕d4+?!

78...♕d5 79.♖g2+ ♔f3

79.♔g2 ♕f4?!

79...♕d5+ 80.♔h3 ♔f2

80.♔h3 ♕h6+ 81.♔g4 ♕g6+ (D)



We have played 12 moves, and White is now 12 moves further from mate than at the outset!

82.♔f4?!

82.♔h4! is by far the toughest.

82...♕d6+?!

82...♕f6+! 83.♔g4 ♔f2 (a pattern well-known) ends resistance.

83.♔g4 ♕g6+ 84.♔f4?! ♕f6+! 85.♔e4?

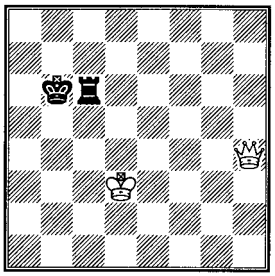
85.♔g4 is mate in 14.

85...♕h4+ 0-1

Here come now three fresh examples in which the stronger side showed (more or less) good understanding of this ending. Grimmell's analyses were probably studied in depth!

(213) Moradiabadi – Nielsen
Athens 2010
Catalan Opening [E04]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘f3 ♘f6 4.g3 d×c4 5.♗g2 a6 6.0-0 ♘c6 7.♗g5 ♗e7 8.e3 0-0 9.♘bd2 e5 10.♘×c4 e×d4 11.♘×d4 ♘×d4 12.♕×d4 ♕×d4 13.e×d4 ♖d8 14.♖ad1 ♗g4 15.♖c1 c6 16.♘b6 ♖ab8 17.♗f4 ♗d6 18.♗e5 ♗e6 19.♗×f6 g×f6 20.d5 c×d5 21.♗×d5 ♗e5 22.♗×e6 f×e6 23.♘c4 ♗d4 24.♖c2 ♖d7 25.♘d2 ♔f7 26.♘f3 ♗b6 27.♖e1 ♖bd8 28.♖e4 e5 29.♖h4 ♔e6 30.♘g5+ ♔f5 31.♘e4 h5 32.♖c3 ♖d3 33.♔f1 ♖×c3 34.b×c3 ♔g6 35.♔e2 f5 36.♘d2 e4 37.f3 e×f3+ 38.♘×f3 ♖e8+ 39.♔d2 ♗e3+ 40.♔c2 ♗h6 41.♖d4 ♖e2+ 42.♔b3 ♗f8 43.♖d7 b6 44.a4 ♖f2 45.♘h4+ ♔f6 46.♖c7 ♖×h2 47.♖c6+ ♔f7 48.♘×f5 ♖f2 49.♘d6+ ♗×d6 50.♖×d6 ♖f6 51.♖d5 ♔g6 52.♔b4 ♔h6 53.c4 ♖g6 54.♖d3 ♔g5 55.a5 ♔g4 56.a×b6 ♖×b6+ 57.♔c5 ♖b8 58.♖c3 a5 59.♔d5 a4 60.c5 ♖d8+ 61.♔e6 ♖a8 62.♖a3 ♖b8 63.c6 ♖b3 64.c7 ♖×a3 65.c8♕ ♖×g3 66.♔e5+ ♔h4 67.♕d8+ ♔h3 68.♕d7+ ♖g4 69.♕d3+ ♔h4 70.♕e3 ♖g3 71.♕f4+ ♔h3 72.♕×a4 h4 73.♔f5 ♖g2 74.♕d4 ♖g3 75.♕d8 ♖g2 76.♔f4 ♖g3 77.♕e7 ♖g4+ 78.♔f3 ♖g3+ 79.♔f2 ♖g2+ 80.♔f1 ♖g3 81.♕e4 ♖g5 82.♕h1+ ♔g3 83.♕g2+ ♔f4 84.♕h2+ ♔g4 85.♔g2 ♔h5+ 86.♔h1 ♖g3 87.♕e2+ ♔g5 88.♔h2 ♔h6 89.♕e5 ♔g6 90.♕f4 ♔h5 91.♕f6 ♖h3+ 92.♔g2 ♖g3+ 93.♔f2 ♖g5 94.♕h8+ ♔g4 95.♔g2 ♖g6 96.♕h7 ♖g5 97.♕h6 ♖f5 98.♕e3 ♖f4 99.♕e2+ ♔f5 100.♔h3 ♖e4 101.♕h5+ ♔f6 102.♕h8+ ♔f5 103.♕h7+ ♔e5 104.♕g6 ♖d4 105.♕g5+ ♔d6 106.♔g2 ♔c6 107.♔f3 ♔b6 108.♔e3 ♖c4 109.♔d3 ♖c6 110.♕×h4 (D)



110...♔b7?!

Black decided to stay in the corner, which is a bad policy in general. He should focus moving towards the center with 110...♔c5! when White needs 25 moves to mate.

111.♕d8 ♖b6?!

111...♖c1 was again correct, not allowing the white king to approach.

112.♔c4 Now White mates in 16.

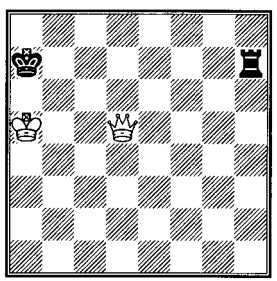
112...♖c6+ 113.♔b5 ♖c7 114.♕d5+

114.♕e8 is good as well.

114...♔a7

After 114...♔c8 we will again meet a well-known pattern: 115.♕a8+ ♔d7 116.♔b6.

115.♔a5 ♖h7 (D)



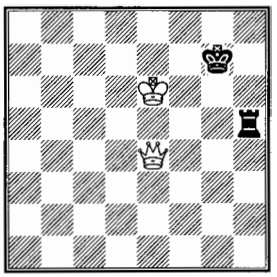
115...♖b7 116.♕d4+ ♔b8 117.♔a6 ♔c8 118.♕h8+.

116.♕d4+ ♔b8 117.♕f4+ ♔a7 118.♕e3+ ♔b8 119.♕g3+ ♔a7 120.♕g1+

And Black resigned in view of 120...♔b7 (120...♔b8 121.♕g8+) 121.♕b1+. **1–0**

(214) Svidler – Howell
Amsterdam 2010
Réti Opening [A16]

1.♘f3 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 d5 4.♕a4+ ♗d7 5.♕b3 d×c4 6.♕×c4 a6 7.e4 b5 8.♕e2 ♗c8 9.d4 ♗g7 10.g3 c5 11.d×c5 0-0 12.♗g2 ♗e6 13.e5 ♘fd7 14.0-0 ♘×c5 15.♖d1 ♘bd7 16.♘d4 ♗c4 17.♕e3 ♘×e5 18.♘c6 ♘×c6 19.♖×d8 ♖a×d8 20.♕×c5 ♗×c3 21.♗×c6 ♖d1+ 22.♔g2 ♗f6 23.♗b7 ♗f1+ 24.♔f3 ♖fd8 25.♗e4 ♖e1 26.♕c2 ♗g7 27.g4 h5 28.g×h5 f5 29.♗b7 g×h5 30.♕c7 ♗e2+ 31.♔g3 ♖g1+ 32.♗g2 ♖d3+ 33.♗e3 ♖×a1 34.♕c8+ ♔f7 35.♕×f5+ ♗f6 36.h4 ♖×e3+ 37.f×e3 ♗g4 38.♕h7+ ♗g7 39.♗e4 ♔f8 40.♗g6 ♖×a2 41.♗×h5 ♗×h5 42.♕×h5 ♖×b2 43.♕f5+ ♗f6 44.e4 ♖c2 45.h5 ♖c3+ 46.♔g2 ♖c2+ 47.♔f3 ♖c3+ 48.♔e2 b4 49.h6 ♖c2+ 50.♔e3 ♖h2 51.♕g6 b3 52.h7 ♗g7 53.e5 ♖h6 54.♕f5+ ♔e8 55.♔d2 e6 56.♕e4 ♔f7 57.♔c3 ♖h5 58.♔×b3 ♖×e5 59.♕h4 ♖d5 60.h8♕ ♗×h8 61.♕×h8 a5 62.♔c4 ♖f5 63.♔d4 ♖d5+ 64.♔e4 ♖f5 65.♕h7+ ♔e8 66.♕g7 ♖d5 67.♕f6 ♔d7 68.♕f7+ ♔d6 69.♕e8 ♖e5+ 70.♔f4 ♖f5+ 71.♔g4 ♔e5 72.♕d8 a4 73.♕a5+ ♔f6 74.♕×a4 ♔e7 75.♕a7+ ♔d6 76.♕b8+ ♔d7 77.♕b7+ ♔d6 78.♕c8 ♔e7 79.♕c7+ ♔e8 80.♕d6 ♔f7 81.♕d7+ ♔f6 82.♕e8 ♖g5+ 83.♔h4 ♖f5 84.♕f8+ ♔g6 85.♕e7 ♖e5 86.♔g4 ♖e4+ 87.♔f3 ♖e1 88.♕h4 ♖e5 89.♕e7 ♖e1 90.♔f4 ♖f1+ 91.♔e5 ♖e1+ 92.♔d6 ♖d1+ 93.♔c6 ♖e1 94.♕h4 ♖e5 95.♔d6 ♖h5 96.♕e4+ ♔g7 97.♔×e6 (D)



Svidler learned his lesson (see his previous game) and he is merciless!

97...♖h6+ 98.♔e7 ♖g6 99.♕d4+

99.♕h4 is a move shorter.

99...♔g8 100.♕e5! ♖g1

Best. If 100...♖a6, then 101.♕g3+ ♔h8 (101...♔h7 102.♕d3+) 102.♕c3+ ♔h7 103.♕d3+.

101.♕d5+ ♔h7 102.♕d3+ ♔g8 103.♔f6!

Now that the checking square (f1) is covered, the king approaches.

103...♖g7 104.♕d5+ ♔h7 105.♕h1+ ♔g8 106.♕h5 ♖a7

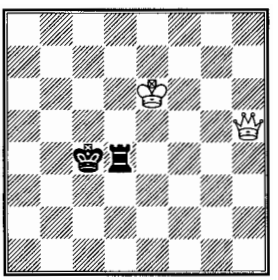
106...♖g1 107.♕f7+ ♔h8 108.♕a7 ♖g8 109.♕c7 ♖f8+ 110.♔g6 ♖g8+ 111.♔h6

107.♕d5+

And Black resigned in view of 107...♔h7 (107...♔h8 108.♕h1+ ♔g8 109.♕g1+) 108.♕h1+ ♔g8 109.♕g1+. **1-0**

(215) Jones – Kabanov
Khanty Mansiysk 2010
Scotch Game [C45]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.d4 e×d4 4.♘×d4 ♗c5 5.♘×c6 ♕f6 6.♕f3 b×c6 7.♘d2 d6 8.♘b3 ♗b6 9.♗d2 ♕×f3 10.g×f3 ♘e7 11.a4 a5 12.♗e3 ♗×e3 13.f×e3 0-0 14.0-0-0 f6 15.♘d4 f5 16.e5 d×e5 17.♗c4+ ♔h8 18.♘b3 f4 19.e×f4 e×f4 20.♖he1 ♘f5 21.♖e5 ♘d6 22.♗d3 g6 23.♘×a5 ♗h3 24.♔d2 ♖fe8 25.♖de1 ♗g2 26.♖×e8+ ♘×e8 27.♘×c6 ♘d6 28.♗b5 ♗×f3 29.♖e7 ♗g2 30.♘e5 ♖f8 31.♔e1 f3 32.♘g4 c6 33.♗d3 ♖f4 34.♖e6 ♘f7 35.♘f2 ♖×a4 36.♖×c6 ♘e5 37.♖c5 ♘×d3+ 38.♘×d3 ♖h4 39.b4 ♗h3 40.b5 ♗f5 41.♘f2 ♖b4 42.♔d2 ♔g7 43.♔e3 ♔f6 44.♔×f3 ♔e7 45.c3 ♖b3 46.♔f4 ♖b2 47.♘d1 ♖×h2 48.b6 ♖h4+ 49.♔f3 ♔d6 50.♘f2 ♔×c5 51.b7 ♖c4 52.b8♕ ♖×c3+ 53.♔f4 h5 54.♘e4+ ♗×e4 55.♔×e4 ♖c4+ 56.♔e5 ♖g4 57.♕b2 ♔c4 58.♕c2+ ♔b4 59.♔d5 ♖g5+ 60.♔c6 ♖g4 61.♔b6 ♔a3 62.♔c5 ♖g5+ 63.♔c6 ♖g4 64.♕b1 ♖c4+ 65.♔d5 ♖g4 66.♔e5 ♖g5+ 67.♔e6 ♖g4 68.♔f6 ♖g3 69.♕a1+ ♔b3 70.♕d1+ ♔c4 71.♕e2+ ♔b3 72.♕d1+ ♔c4 73.♕e2+ ♔b3 74.♕b5+ ♔c2 75.♕c6+ ♔d2 76.♕d6+ ♖d3 77.♕f4+ ♔c3 78.♔×g6 ♖d5 79.♔f6 ♔d3 80.♔e6 ♖d4 81.♕f3+ ♔c4 82.♕×h5 (D)



As the defending king is well centralized, the win is one of the longest; it takes 28 moves.

82...♔d3

82...♖d3 keeps the win in 28 moves but the text reduces it to 26!

83.♕c5 ♔e4 84.♕f5+ ♔e3 85.♔e5 ♖d3 86.♕f4+ ♔e2 87.♔e4 ♖d2

Black doesn't defend with accuracy. Again, 87...♖c3 was a bit better.

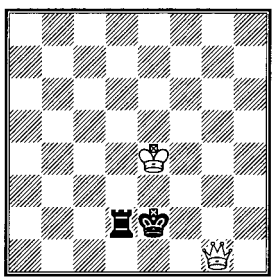
88.♕f3+ ♔e1 89.♕h5

89.♔e3? would be a clear blunder: 89...♖d3+! 90.♔×d3 but also the text could be improved by 89.♕h1+ ♔e2 90.♕c1!.

89...♔f2 90.♕h1 ♖e2+ 91.♔f4 ♖d2 92.♕h2+?!

92.♕e4! ♖e2 93.♕d4+ ♔g2 94.♔g4 and mate in 14.

92...♔e1 93.♕g1+ ♔e2 94.♔e4! (D)



White has made progress and now needs "just" 17 moves.

94...♖c2 95.♕g2+ ♔d1 96.♕f1+ ♔d2 97.♔d4 ♖b2 98.♕f2+ ♔c1 99.♕e1+ ♔c2 100.♔c4

White is pushing the black king on the edge by the usual methods.

100...♖a2 101.♕e2+ ♔b1 102.♕d1+ ♔b2 103.♔b4 ♖a8 104.♕e2+

The rook was forced to leave the king's protection and now White easily picks it up: 104...♔c1 105.♕f1+ ♔c2 106.♕g2+. **1-0**

Conclusion

The ending is of course won for the queen, but as it is not met often, even very strong players do not know how to handle it perfectly. The usual time trouble is a negative factor as well and the 50-move rule becomes the nightmare for the queen and heaven for the rook!

Miscellaneous

Critical Games

Concept

Did you ever think how you should approach a critical game? A game that you need a certain result (draw or win) in order to achieve your aim? If you needed a win, you probably thought that you were obliged to go in for sharp continuations, burning the bridges behind you...

You probably thought and came to the conclusion that you should create complications quickly, sacrificing material to attack and avoid all the "equal" variations. And if you needed a draw probably you thought that you were obliged to go for a quiet game and seek exchanges, which would bring the game to a peaceful end. But these strategies don't pay off and do not always bring the desired results. The odds of winning or losing are nearly equal. It's good to for you to have the initiative, but without undue risk!

So, in the first case, a good chessplayer tries to maintain a small initiative and continually pushes the opponent, giving him the chance to make a mistake. Do not believe that to win a crucial game you should play perfectly! It is sufficient to "drive" your opponent into making a mistake under pressure, which of course you should take advantage of! What you really need in a critical game is to increase your attention and your temper.

In the second case you should be the one to seek the initiative, even in the early stages. To achieve the draw

you should make your opponent aware of the possibility of losing and understand that there is no way that your opponent will accept a draw before a king-versus-king ending comes about if you play quietly.

What happens now if you are the one whose opponent needs to win? What should you do in this case? Let look at two key situations: First, your opponent goes in for an attack and has the initiative. You might expect that good defense and simply rejecting the threats would bring the desired result. There are a lot of cases in which the defending side has won this way, countering with excellent ideas and beautiful defensive play and then counter-attacking the weaknesses created by the opponent's attack. More correct is to accept the challenge of your opponent and get into the proposed complications, seizing the initiative. The initiative is the most important factor in chess today. Kasparov did not hesitate to even sacrifice the exchange to gain the initiative. Moreover, do not forget the psychological aspect. Giving the opponent the initiative plays into his hands and gives him courage!

Secondly, your opponent follows the quiet street of the small advantage and he is pressing you slowly and does not avoid some "equal" variations. The most important thing is to avoid remaining passive and try to be a bit more active. Passivity leads to a continuous undervaluation of your position with all the related consequences and usually leads to certain defeat! Play calmly and seize the initiative with active play.

But beware: nothing is absolute in chess. There are exceptions, for example, if you know that your opponent is not good attacking, while you're flawless defending, then it makes more sense to defend passively if he attacks you. But this should be somewhat rare. We will exam all the above situations in the following examples. In all of them, one of the players had a good reason to win; for the other a draw would be fine... We will start with a famous game from St. Petersburg 1914. Emanuel Lasker was in a must-win situation, a half-point behind Capablanca, with only three rounds remaining. Of course, this game has been analyzed in many sources and it is rather well-known, but still is a superb example!

(216) Lasker – Capablanca
St Petersburg 1914
Ruy Lopez [C68]
(Notes based on those of Garry Kasparov)

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗×c6

A very surprising choice. The Exchange Variation of the Ruy Lopez was a dangerous weapon in Lasker's hands. But nobody in the audience or among the participants believed that this quiet opening would work against Capablanca, whose excellent technique was already widely recognized. With the charming self-confidence of youth, José Raúl unfortunately shared this misconception and did not recognize Lasker's real intentions.

4...d×c6 5.d4

Now Lasker is in a hurry to open the position for his knight pair...

5...e×d4 6.♕×d4 ♕×d4 7.♘×d4

Even the queens are off the board. Is this the way to play for a win in a decisive game? Keep in mind that in the Exchange Variation, the bishop pair can be very useful to Black, but White has

a pawn majority on the kingside. Capablanca comments: "For many years, the great Lasker considered that this position was theoretically won for White because of White's preponderance of pawns on the kingside. It is true that if all the pieces were to be exchanged... White should win... His famous predecessor, Steinitz, on the other hand, never had any faith in the efficacy of this system. He maintained that with the two bishops and free game Black had more than enough compensation... I am inclined to agree with Steinitz."

7...♗d6

Nowadays the move 7...♗d7 is supposed to be the main line. With the text move Black plans to castle kingside, as he believed that his king ought to remain on the weaker side, to oppose later the advance of White's pawns. But Black later found ways to enhance his bishop pair by castling queenside and then opening lines.

8.♘c3 ♘e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.f4

Capablanca criticized the text move, as it leaves the e-pawn weak.

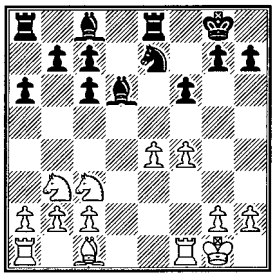
10...♖e8

Later Dr. Tarrasch suggested a "better" line: 10...f5 11.e5 ♗c5 12.♗e3 ♗×d4 13.♗×d4 b6 and despite White's strong passed pawn Black has enough defensive resources. So strong was the impression of Lasker's original plan that the commentators tried to improve Black's play at the earliest possible stage! But Capablanca was right in his assessment: Black had little to worry about.

11.♘b3

11.e5 ♗c5 12.♗e3 ♘d5 13.♘×d5 c×d5 would be fine for Black.

11...f6 (D)



12.f5!?

Under the classical rules of the Steinitz positional school, this move has to be condemned. White gets a weak and backward pawn on e4, Black a stronghold on e5, with a devaluation of White's pawn advantage on the kingside – too many negative points for just one move. But Lasker's eagle eye had seen much further. "It has been wrongly claimed that this wins the game, but I would like nothing better than to have such a position again" – Capablanca

12...b6!

And here 12...♗d7 13.♗f4 ♖ad8 was recommended by stern post-mortem analysts. But obviously the bishop is better placed on b7, where it attacks the pawn on e4. The other option was 12...g5!? 13.f×g6 ♘×g6 14.♖×f6 ♗e5 15.♖f2 ♗×c3 16.b×c3 ♖×e4 17.♗g5=.

13.♗f4 ♗b7?!

An inaccuracy. In general Black should be happy to undouble his c-pawns, but here the pawn on d6 will become a permanent weakness. Necessary was 13...♗×f4! 14.♖×f4 c5! 15.♖d1 ♗b7 16.♖f2 ♖ad8 (16...♖ac8!? with the idea ...♘c6-e5) 17.♖fd2 (17.♖×d8 ♖×d8 18.♖d2 ♖×d2 19.♘×d2 ♘c6=) 17...♖×d2 18.♖×d2 ♘c6 19.♖d7 ♖c8 and after ...♘e5 Black is fine. This plan was recommended by Capablanca – but

alas, only after the game was over. John Watson quotes: "With modern eyes, all this seems almost self-evidently true; and yet for years, commentators have claimed that White had a large or even winning advantage after 12.f5!?."

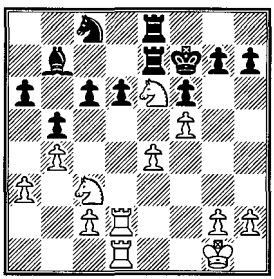
14.♗×d6 c×d6 15.♘d4 ♖ad8?!

Capablanca doesn't take White's plan seriously. The knight on e6 will be a bone in his throat. So 15...♗c8 was obligatory. Maybe the Cuban was too proud to recognize his mistake so soon.

16.♘e6 ♖d7 17.♖ad1 ♘c8

Interesting was 17...c5 but White keeps the advantage after 18.♖f3! (18.♘d5 ♗×d5 19.e×d5 b5 20.♖f3± or 18.♖f2?! d5 19.e×d5 ♘×d5 20.♘×d5 ♖×d5 21.♖fd2 ♖×f5 22.♖d8 ♖×d8 23.♖×d8+ ♔f7 24.♖d7+ ♔×e6 25.♖×b7=) 18...♔f7 (18...d5?! 19.♖g3 g5 20.f×g6 h×g6 21.e×d5±) 19.♔f2.

18.♖f2 b5 19.♖fd2 ♖de7 20.b4 ♔f7 21.a3 (D)



21...♗a8?

The question mark is deserved, not by the move, but for the idea of opening the a-file, which can be used effectively only by the white rooks. Of course, Black has lost the strategic battle, but the exchange sacrifice, 21...♖×e6 22.f×e6+ ♖×e6, would have given him the best fighting chances.

22.♔f2 ♖a7 23.g4 h6 24.♖d3 a5 25.h4 a×b4 26.a×b4 ♖ae7?!

A sad retreat. It would be better to play 26...♖a3 followed by ...♘b6-c4.

27.♔f3 ♖g8 28.♔f4

28.♖g1 would be more accurate...

28...g6

As now the immediate 28...g5+ should have been tried.

29.♖g3 g5+

The last move to be criticized by the annotators. But it's too late for good advice. 29...g×f5 doesn't offer any relief: 30.e×f5 d5 31.g5! h×g5+ 32.h×g5 f×g5+ 33.♘×g5+ ♔f8 34.f6 ♖a7 35.♔e5! +−.

30.♔f3 ♘b6 31.h×g5 h×g5 32.♖h3!

Lasker continues to execute his plan without any diversions. 32.♖×d6 would have given Black some extra breathing time: 32...♘c4 33.♖d1 ♖h8.

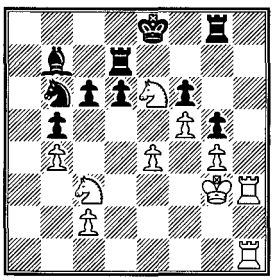
32...♖d7

The knight is chained to the b6-square. After 32...♘c4 33.♖a1 the combined invasion of the white rooks on the a- and h-files demolish Black's defense.

33.♔g3

The final preparation.

33...♔e8 34.♖dh1 ♗b7 (D)



35.e5!

For 23 moves (12.f5!?) Black hasn't been able to prevent this pawn from advancing!

35...d×e5 36.♘e4 ♘d5 37.♘6c5 ♗c8 38.♘×d7 ♗×d7 39.♖h7 ♖f8 40.♖a1

Painful punishment for the 24th move.

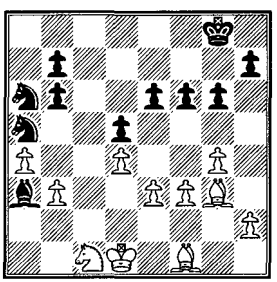
40...♔d8 41.♖a8+ ♗c8 42.♘c5 1-0

And Black resigned, and the old chess wizard Lasker had become the winner of this historic contest. The psychological effect of this brilliant victory was long-lasting. A shaken Capablanca lost with white in the next round to Dr. Tarrasch. And even seven years later, in his world championship match against Lasker, he never played 3...a6 in the Ruy Lopez!

The next game probably will make you sleepy, at least for the first 35 moves or so!

(217) Botvinnik – Bronstein
Moscow 1951
Grünfeld Defense [D71]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 c6 4.♗g2 d5 5.c×d5 c×d5 6.♘c3 ♗g7 7.♘h3 ♗×h3 8.♗×h3 ♘c6 9.♗g2 e6 10.e3 0-0 11.♗d2 ♖c8 12.0-0 ♘d7 13.♘e2 ♕b6 14.♗c3 ♖fd8 15.♘f4 ♘f6 16.♕b3 ♘e4 17.♕×b6 a×b6 18.♗e1 ♘a5 19.♘d3 ♗f8 20.f3 ♘d6 21.♗f2 ♗h6 22.♖ac1 ♘ac4 23.♖fe1 ♘a5 24.♔f1 ♗g7 25.g4 ♘c6 26.b3 ♘b5 27.♔e2 ♗f8 28.a4 ♘c7 29.♗g3 ♘a6 30.♗f1 f6 31.♖ed1 ♘a5 32.♖×c8 ♖×c8 33.♖c1 ♖×c1 34.♘×c1 ♗a3 35.♔d1 (D)



A critical position at a critical stage of the 1951 world championship match. This was the 23rd game (out of a total of 24) and Bronstein was leading with an 11½-10½ score when it began.

35...♗×c1?!

Black decided to win a (useless) pawn but he had to give the bishop pair versus the knight pair advantage to his opponent. A bad decision that cost Black the title of the world champion! He had to opt for 35...♔f7 36.♔c2 (36.♗×a6? b×a6 37.♗c7 ♗×c1 38.♔×c1 ♘×b3+ 39.♔c2 ♘a5∓) 36...♘b4+ 37.♔b1 ♘a6=.

36.♔×c1 ♘×b3+ 37.♔c2 ♘a5

The knight-pair is stuck on the rim and White only has to open the center.

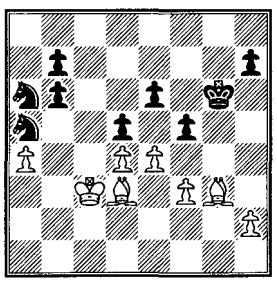
38.♔c3 ♔f7 39.e4?!

Too early. Accurate was 39.♗d6 ♘c6 40.e4.

39...f5?!

Black had to go for 39...d×e4 40.f×e4 e5! 41.d×e5 (41.d5?! ♘c5) 41...♘c5 or 39...♘c6, restricting the bishops.

40.g×f5 g×f5 41.♗d3 ♔g6 (D)



Here the game was adjourned and White had to seal his move.

42.♗d6?

White missed 42.♗b1! ♘c6 (If Black chose 42...f×e4 the game opens up after 43.f×e4 d×e4 44.♗×e4+ ♔g7 and White's bishops obviously prevail. An interesting variation was found by Salo Flohr: 45.♗×b7! ♘×b7 46.♔c4+-

followed by ♔b5-a6-b6 and the a-pawn eventually queens. The other options are 42...♘c4 43.♗f4 with the idea ♗a2 and 42...d×e4 43.f×e4 ♔g5 44.e×f5 e×f5 45.♗d6±) 43.e×d5 e×d5 44.♗a2 ♘e7 (44...♘ab4 45.♗b3+−) 45.♗h4±.

42...♘c6 43.♗b1 ♔f6?

And now Black in turn missed 43...♘a7! (with the idea ...b5) 44.e×d5 e×d5 45.♗a2 b5 46.a5 (46.♗×d5 b×a4) 46...b4+! (46...♘c6?! 47.♗×d5 ♘×a5 48.f4±) 47.♔d3 ♘b5 48.♗e5 ♘ac7 49.♔c2 ♔f7 50.♔b3 ♘a6=.

44.♗g3!

After 44.e×d5?! e×d5 45.♗a2 ♔e6= or 44.h4?! ♘ab8 45.♗f4 ♘d7 46.♗g5+ ♔g6 47.e×d5 e×d5 48.♗a2 h6 49.♗f4 ♘e7! (49...♘f6?! 50.♗e5) 50.♗d6 ♘c8!= White cannot make headway.

44...f×e4

If 44...♘ab4, then 45.♗e5+! (45.♗c7? would only lead to a draw after 45...d×e4 46.f×e4 f×e4 47.♗×e4 ♘d5±) and Black's king is pushed to g6: 45...♔g6 (45...♘×e5 46.d×e5+ ♔×e5 47.♔×b4+−) after which White wins by 46.♗d6 ♘a6 47.e×d5 e×d5 48.♗a2+−. Other Black's tries are 44...♔g6 45.e×f5+ e×f5 46.♗a2 ♘ab4 47.♗b3 ♔f6 48.♗d6+− or 44...♔g5 45.e×d5 e×d5 46.♗a2 ♘cb4 47.♗b3 f4 48.♗e1± planning ♗d2-c1-a3, or, finally, 44...♘e7 45.♗h4+ ♔f7 46.♗×e7 ♔×e7 47.e×d5 e×d5 48.♗×f5 h6 49.♗c8+−.

45.f×e4 h6 46.♗f4 h5

Or 46...♔g7 47.e×d5 e×d5 48.♗a2 ♘ab4 49.♗b3 ♔g6 50.♗d6+−.

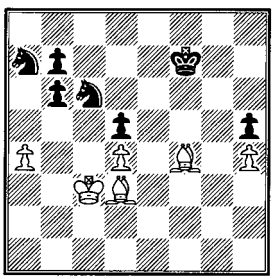
47.e×d5 e×d5 48.h4 ♘ab8 49.♗g5+ ♔f7 50.♗f5?!

Accurate was 50.♗c2! ♘a7 51.♗d1 ♔g6 52.♗f3+−.

50...♘a7

More resistant was 50...♘e7 but White had a good choice anyway: 51.♗h3! (51.♗×e7 ♔×e7 52.♗g6 ♘c6 53.♗×h5 ♘a7 54.♔b4 ♘c6+ 55.♔b5 ♘×d4+ 56.♔×b6±) 51...♘bc6 52.♗g2 ♔g7! 53.♗×e7 ♘×e7 54.♔b4 ♘c6+ 55.♔b5 ♘×d4+ 56.♔×b6+−.

51.♗f4 ♘bc6 52.♗d3 (D)



52...♘c8?!

Black's final mistake. Again he should play 52...♘e7! 53.♗c7 ♔e6 54.♗×b6 ♘ac6 55.♗e2 ♘f5 56.♗×h5 ♘×h4 57.♗c5± and Black would have good chances to save the half-point.

53.♗e2 ♔g6 54.♗d3+?!

54.♗f3 ♘8e7 55.♗c7 wins.

54...♔f6 55.♗e2 ♔g6?!

A better chance can be found in 55...♔f5! 56.♗h2 ♔e4 57.♗g1 ♘d6 58.♗×h5 ♘f5 59.♗g6±.

56.♗f3 ♘6e7

Or 56...♘8e7 57.♗c7 (57.♗g5 ♘f5 58.♗×d5 ♘f×d4 59.♗e4+ ♔f7 60.♗e3±) 57...♘f5 58.♗×d5 ♘f×d4 59.♗×b6+−.

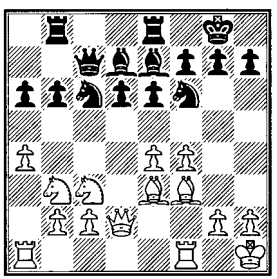
57.♗g5! 1-0

And Black resigned in view of 57...♘c6 58.♗×d5 ♘d6 59.♗f3 b5 (59...♔f5 60.♗c1! b5 61.♗×c6 b×c6 62.a5+−) 60.♗f4 ♘f5 61.♗×c6 b×c6 62.a5 ♘e7 63.♔b4 ♔f5 (63...♘d5+ 64.♔c5 ♘×f4 65.a6+−) 64.a6 ♘d5+ 65.♔c5 ♔×f4 66.a7 ♘c7 67.♔×c6+−. This win allowed Botvinnik to equalize the score and retain the title as the last game of the match ended in a draw (12-12).

In the next game Kasparov required only a draw to win the world championship, but plays a sharp asymmetrical defense, willingly going for the jugular, but also putting his own at risk! The Sicilian Defense is a two-edged sword that can cut both ways. The lesson here is: if you want a draw, then play for the win.

(218) Karpov – Kasparov
Moscow 1985
Sicilian Defense [B85]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 d6 3.d4 c×d4 4.♘×d4 ♘f6 5.♘c3 a6 6.♗e2 e6 7.0-0 ♗e7 8.f4 0-0 9.♔h1 ♕c7 10.a4 ♘c6 11.♗e3 ♖e8 12.♗f3 ♖b8 13.♕d2 ♗d7 14.♘b3 b6 (D)



The preference of most chessplayers. The other option is 14...b5 15.a×b5 a×b5 16.♕e2± Petrosian-Ter Sahakyan, Yerevan 2009.

15.g4

Karpov makes an uncharacteristically aggressive departure from a previous position obtained in this match – he is playing to win... The text move weakens his own kingside in an effort to storm Black's castled position.

15...♗c8

Making room for the f6-knight.

16.g5

White gains space on the kingside to build an attack.

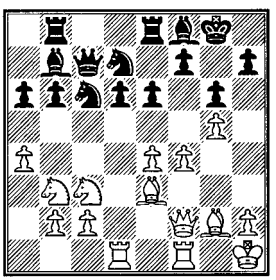
16...♘d7 17.♕f2

As a testament to the speed of modern information flow, this whole line of play was tested just days before this game in the Montpellier Candidates' tournament. In that game, White tried 17.♗g2 which was met by 17...♘a5 (17...♗f8 18.♖ad1 b5 19.a×b5 a×b5 20.♕e2 ♗a6 21.♖a1 ♕b7 22.♘a5 ♘×a5 23.♖×a5± Wang Hao-Ma Qun, Guangzhou 2010) 18.♕f2 ♗f8 19.♖ad1 ♘c4 20.♗c1 b5∞ Sokolov-Ribli, Montpellier 1985. Karpov departs from this line of play in an effort to improve on White's attack.

17...♗f8

Black could even think of 17...♘a5 18.♖ad1 or even go for the modern treatment: 17...♗b7 18.♗g2 ♘a5 19.♖ad1 ♘×b3 20.c×b3 ♗c6 21.b4∞ Anand-Ivanchuk, Morelia /Linares 2008.

18.♗g2 ♗b7 19.♖ad1 g6 (D)



20.♗c1

A nice idea, clearing the third rank having in mind to proceed with ♖d3-h3. 20.f5?! ♘ce5 or 20.♕h4?! ♗g7 21.♖f3 ♘b4 22.♖h3 ♘f8 was not much for White.

20...♖bc8?!

Most commentators criticized the text move, proposing 20...♘c5! 21.♘×c5 b×c5 22.♖d3 ♘d4 23.♖h3 ♕e7! ∞ and they were actually right!

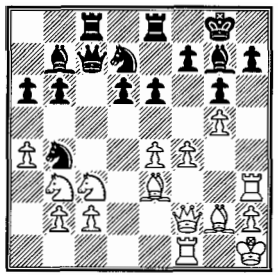
21.♖d3

White's plans are clear as he assembles an attack. The attack is dangerous despite its obviousness.

21...♘b4 22.♖h3 ♗g7?!

Black should seriously consider opting for the active 22...f5! 23.g×f6 ♘×f6 24.f5 (24.♕d4? e5! 25.♕×b4 d5 26.♘×d5 ♘×d5 27.♕e1 ♘×f4∓) 24...e×f5 25.e×f5 ♗g7 26.♖h4±.

23.♗e3? (D)



No attacking plan seems decisive, because White's knights are too far from the kingside; therefore, Karpov allows Black the time to better prepare his defense. This position is White's high watermark; that point at which White's winning chances are greatest. How should White proceed? Let's consider the most obvious, 23.♕h4?, when Black could play 23...♘f8, bringing White's attack to a halt: 24.f5 e×f5 25.e×f5 ♗×g2+ 26.♔×g2 ♕b7+ 27.♔g1 ♗×c3 28.b×c3 ♖e4!∓.

The sharpest line of attack is an immediate 23.f5! when Black cannot allow the pawn to push on to f6. Thus, this breaks up the protective pawn structure around Black's king. That in turn enables many attacking plans: 23...e×f5 (23...g×f5 24.e×f5 ♗×g2+ 25.♔×g2 ♕b7+ 26.♔g1± Boliviano-Pepekan Internet 2006) 24.e×f5 ♘e5! (24...g×f5? 25.♕h4! ♕c4 26.♕×h7+ ♔f8 27.♕×f5 ♗×g2+ 28.♔×g2 ♘×c2 29.♕×d7+−) 25.♕h4! (25.f6? ♗×g2+ 26.♔×g2 ♕b7+ 27.♔g1 ♗f8 28.♕h4 h5 29.♕×b4 ♖c4 30.♘a5 [30.♕a3? ♖g4+ 31.♖g3 ♘f3+ 32.♔f2 ♘×h2 −+] 30...♕c8! 31.♘×c4 d5!! 32.♕×f8+ [32.♘×b6?! ♕×h3 33.♕f4 ♗c5+ 34.♔h1 ♘g4; 32.♘d6 ♕×h3 33.♘×d5 ♘f3+∓] 32...♔×f8 33.♘×e5 ♕×h3∓) 25...♕c4 26.♖f4! (26.♕×h7+ ♔f8 27.♘d2! ♗×g2+ 28.♔×g2 ♕c6+ 29.♘f3 g×f5 30.♕×f5 ♘d5! 31.♔g1 ♘×c3 32.b×c3 [32.♘×e5? ♘e2+] 32...♘×f3+ 33.♖h×f3 ♕c5+ 34.♕×c5 ♖×c5 35.♖×f7+ ♔g8 36.♖d7±) 26...♘f3 27.♖h×f3! (27.♖×c4? ♘×h4 28.♖×c8 ♗×c8 29.♖×h4 ♖e1+ 30.♗f1 ♗×c3 31.b×c3 ♘a2 32.♔g2 ♘×c1∞ Timoshenko-Gorelov, Moscow 1988) 27...♗×f3 28.♖×c4 ♖×c4 29.♕f2 ♗×g2+ 30.♔×g2±. Here the course of the game and chess history could have been changed...

23...♖e7!

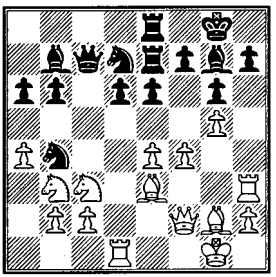
One of the most interesting plans I have ever seen! Black cleverly takes prophylactic measures against White's f5 advance by "pre-doubling" his rooks on the soon-to-be open e-file and at the same time protects his second rank and points such as the sensitive h7. Wrong would be the tempting 23...♗×c3? 24.b×c3 ♕×c3 in view of 25.♗d4 ♕×c2 26.♖h7!+−.

24.♔g1

Suddenly White does not know how to proceed. Options such as 24.♗d4 e5 or 24.♘d4 e5 25.♘de2 e×f4! (25...♘×c2? 26.f5) 26.♘×f4 ♖ce8 or, finally, 24.f5 e×f5 25.e×f5 ♗×g2+ 26.♕×g2 (26.♔×g2? ♗×c3! 27.b×c3 ♕×c3 28.♗d2 [28.♕h4 h5] 28...♕c4∓) 26...♖ce8∞ validate Black's excellent plan (23...♖e7!).

Now the thematic f5-push is discouraged by the odd massing of black rooks on the closed e-file. 25.f5 would be met by 25...e×f5 releasing the counter-attacking energy of the rooks.

25.♖d1 (D)



25...f5!

This effectively puts an end to White's attacking hopes.

26.g×f6

The main alternative was 26.♕d2 e5! (26...f×e4!? 27.♕×d6 ♕×d6 28.♖×d6 e5∞) 27.e×f5 g×f5 28.♘d5 ♘×d5 29.♗×d5+ ♔h8 30.c3 e×f4 31.♗×f4 ♘e5∞. Black should be happy with such variations as now he is fully back in the game.

26...♘×f6!

Black avoids 26...♗×f6?! as after 27.♕d2 d5 28.e5 ♗g7 29.♘d4 the black rooks are not doing much on the e-file. He launches an attack of his own which involves the sacrifice of his b-pawn.

27.♖g3

To prevent ...♘g4. 27.♗×b6 could be played, but Black would be happy after 27...♕b8! (27...♘g4? 28.♗×c7 ♘×f2 29.♗×d6±) 28.♗f3 e5!∞/= as the black rooks will become active.

27...♖f7!?

Kasparov resists passive (but fully playable) defensive moves like the retreat 27...♘d7, trying to profit by White's time-trouble.

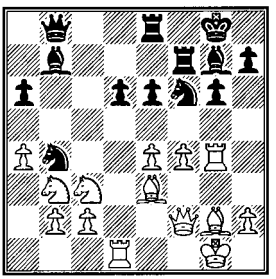
28.♗×b6

What else? White is obliged to accept the challenge.

28...♕b8 29.♗e3 ♘h5 30.♖g4

30.♖f3?! fails to 30...♗×c3! (30...♘f6=) 31.b×c3 ♘a2 and Black attacks too many spots on White's camp.

30...♘f6 (D)



31.♖h4!

Obviously White should avoid 31.♖g5?! ♗h6 32.♖g3 ♘h5 33.♖f3 ♖ef8 34.♗h3 ♗c8!∓ but he cannot also go for the best 31.♖g3 ♘h5 and accept the draw...

31...g5!

Destabilizing and strong. Black has the initiative as he plays for a win against White who is in desperate time trouble.

32.f×g5 ♘g4

32...♘×e4!? was also possible: 33.♕e2 ♘×c3 34.b×c3 ♘d5∞/=.

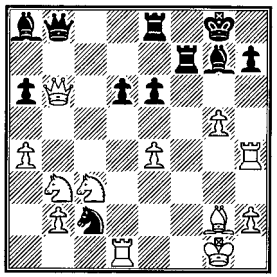
33.♕d2

Now 33.♖×g4 is not quite enough after 33...♖×f2 34.♗×f2 ♘×c2∓.

33...♘×e3 34.♕×e3 ♘×c2 35.♕b6!

Probably best, although White could go for 35.♕h3!? ♕a7+ 36.♔h1 ♘e3 37.♖×d6! (37.♖e1 ♘×g2 38.♕×g2 ♕b6∓; 37.♖g1 ♖f2 [37...♘×g2 38.♕×g2 ♕f2∞/=] 38.♖×h7 ♘×g2∓) 37...♘×g2 38.♕×g2 ♕e3 39.♕e2 ♕×e2 40.♘×e2 ♖f1+ 41.♔g2 ♖ef8 42.♘g3 ♖1f2+ 43.♔h3 ♗c8!∞/=. But here it is obviously Black who is pressing, despite a two-pawn deficit.

35...♗a8! (D)



36.♖×d6?

The losing move. 36.♕×b8 was the best way to fight back: 36...♖×b8 37.♗h3! ♖×b3!? (37...♖e7 38.♖×d6 ♖×b3 39.♖d8+ [39.♗×e6+ ♖×e6 40.♖×e6 ♘d4! 41.♖e8+ ♔f7 42.♖×h7 ♔×e8 43.♖×g7 ♗c6=] 39...♔f7 40.♖×a8 ♖×b2 41.e5!? [41.♘e2 ♘d4 42.g6+ (42.♘×d4? ♗×d4+ 43.♔h1 ♔g7 ∓) 42...♔×g6 43.♖g4+ ♔h6 44.♖h4±] 41...♗×e5 42.♖×h7+ ♗g7 ∞/=) 38.♗×e6 ♖×b2 39.♖×d6 (39.♖f1? ♗×c3 40.♖×f7 ♘d4 41.♖a7+ ♘×e6 42.♖×a8+ ♔g7 43.♖a7+ ♔g6 44.♖×a6 ♔×g5−+) 39...♗×c3 40.♖f4! ♗d4+! 41.♔g2! ♗×e4+! 42.♖×e4 ♗c5 43.♗×f7+ ♔×f7 44.♖f6+ ♔g7 45.♖e2! ♘e1+ 46.♔f1 ♘c2=. However, White didn't have the time to explore such complications.

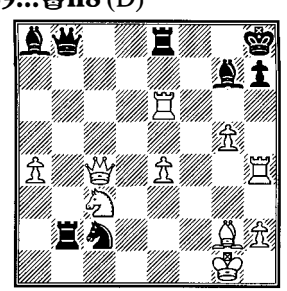
36...♖b7! 37.♕×a6 ♖×b3?

Both players are now in a time scramble and Kasparov misses the crushing 37...♘b4! −+.

38.♖×e6 ♖×b2 39.♕c4!

Threatening mate in one by 40.♖e8++!.

39...♔h8 (D)



39...♕a7+ did not help: 40.♔h1 ♖×e6 41.♕×e6+ ♕f7 42.♕c8+ ♗f8 43.♘d1! (43.♕×a8? ♘e3−+) 43...♖a2 44.g6! h×g6 45.♕c3 ♗g7 46.♕c8±.

40.e5?

A weak move made in time trouble. 40.♖×e8+ ♕×e8 41.♘d1 ♘a3 42.♕d3 ♖a2 (42...♖b1?! 43.e5 h6 44.♖d4!∞) 43.g6 (43.♘e3? ♕f8!−+) 43...♖×g2+ 44.♔×g2 ♕×g6+∞ was interesting but the most accurate was 40.g6! h6 41.♖×e8+ ♕×e8 42.♘d1 ♘a3 (42...♕×g6 43.♘×b2 ♕b6+ 44.♔h1 ♕×b2 45.♕c8+ ♔h7 46.♕f5±) 43.♖×h6+! (43.♕f7 ♕×f7 44.g×f7 ♖b1 45.♗f3 ♘c4 46.♖f4 ♖b8 ∓) 43...♗×h6 44.♕c3+ ♗g7 45.♕h3+ ♔g8 46.♘×b2 ♕×g6 47.♕b3+ ♔h7 48.♕×a3 ♕b6+ 49.♔h1 ♗×b2 50.♕h3+= with a draw, which of course would still hand to Kasparov the world championship.

40...♕a7+ 41.♔h1 ♗×g2+ 42.♔×g2 ♘e3+ 0-1

42...♘d4+ was good as well. As they say in tennis, "Game, set, match." White resigned the game, match, and championship here: 43.♔g3 (43.♔h3 ♕d7! 44.♖d4 ♗×e5!) 43...♗×e5+ 44.♖×e5 ♖×e5 45.♕c8+ ♔g7−+.

In the next game the roles are reversed, as it was now Kasparov in a must-win situation! This was the 24th (and last) game of the 1987 world championship match. Karpov was leading 12-11 and Kasparov had to win in order to equalize the score and keep his title, according to the rules, as he was the champion and Karpov the challenger. Nowadays this rule is no longer valid, as it was a bit unfair to the challenger...

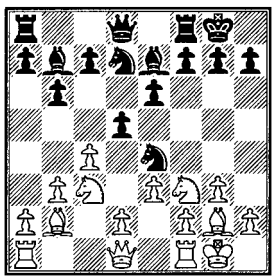
(219) Kasparov – Karpov
Seville 1987
Réti Opening [A14]

(Notes based on those of Nigel Davies)

1.♘f3 d5 2.c4 e6 3.g3 ♘f6 4.♗g2 ♗e7 5.0-0 0-0 6.b3

It's interesting to note that Kasparov, when desperately seeking a win, decides upon the supposedly quiet Réti Opening. His reasoning is that the absence of early exchanges makes the Réti perfect for producing a game full of tension.

6...b6 7.♗b2 ♗b7 8.e3 ♘bd7 9.♘c3 ♘e4 (D)



Karpov, needing only a draw to regain the world championship title (which he had lost in the previous match!), seeks simplification via exchanges.

10.♘e2!?

Kasparov in turn avoids them! The standard move is 10.♕e2, after which 10...a5 11.♖fd1 ♗f6 12.d4 gave White a slight edge in the game Botvinnik-Ståhlberg, Moscow 1956. An interesting alternative is 10.c×d5!?. For example, the game Ljubojevic-Beliavsky, Linares 1992, continued 10...♘×c3 11.♗×c3 ♗×d5 12.♕e2 c5 13.♖fd1 ♕c7 14.♖ac1 ♕b7 15.d3 ♖fd8 16.e4 ♗c6 17.♕b2 ♗f8 18.h4 b5 (18...a5!?) 19.♗a5! ♖dc8 20.a3 ♕a6 21.b4 ♗b7 22.♘e5! ♘b8 and now 23.d4! opened the center to White's advantage.

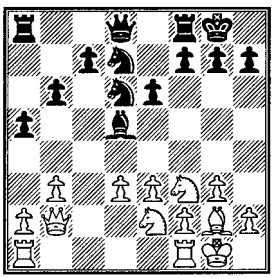
10...a5

After 10...♗f6 White can keep Black under pressure with 11.d4!? c5 12.♘f4, avoiding exchanges and targeting d5.

11.d3 ♗f6!

Exchanges are on Black's menu, so he tries to use his opportunities.

12.♕c2 ♗×b2 13.♕×b2 ♘d6 14.c×d5 ♗×d5 (D)



Karpov is careful to avoid any pawn weaknesses. After 14...e×d5!? 15.d4 c5 16.d×c5 b×c5 Black would have the potential weakness/strength of hanging pawns. Whatever you call it, it is not a symmetrical pawn structure, and so White should be a bit "happier" than Black.

15.d4!

It's tempting to play 15.♘f4 ♗b7 16.♘h5 (16.d4 c5), but then 16...f6 blocks the threat against g7 and leaves Black with a solid game: 17.♘f4 ♕e7 ∞.

15...c5

The natural follow-up. Black wants to exchange his backward c-pawn and achieve a perfectly symmetrical pawn structure.

16.♖fd1 ♖c8?!

Kasparov later suggested 16...c4!?, after which 17.♘f4 (17.b×c4 ♘×c4 18.♕b5 ♘d6 is fine for Black) 17...b5 18.♘×d5 e×d5 19.♘e5 ♘f6 brings about a complex and double-edged game in which Black's queenside pawn majority compensates for his weaknesses. Karpov's move is solid and sensible, but it allows White to keep a minimal edge.

It must be noted that 16...♕f6? is bad in view of 17.♘e5! ♖fd8 18.♗×d5 e×d5 19.♘f4± and after 16...♕e7, White achieves a more pleasant position with 17.♘c3 ♗b7 18.♘a4!± with pressure on the queenside and the center.

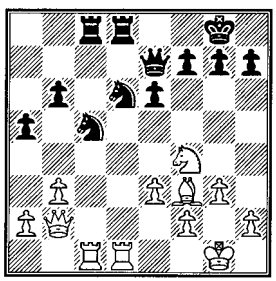
17.♘f4 ♗×f3

Further simplification and the loss of the light-square bishop aren't serious when Black has already evacuated the a8-h1 diagonal. It's too late to play 17...c4?! because White could leave Black's pawns split with 18.♘×d5 e×d5 19.b×c4 d×c4 20.a4!. 17...♗e4? loses to 18.d×c5 ♘×c5 19.♕e5 ♘cb7 20.♘h5+−.

18.♗×f3 ♕e7 19.♖ac1

Simple and natural. There was not much in 19.d×c5 ♘×c5 (19...♖×c5?! 20.♘d3! [20.♕d4?! ♘e5!] 20...♖cc8 21.♖ac1±) 20.♕e5 (20.b4 ♘c4! 21.♕d4 ♘a4∞) 20...♖fd8 21.♘d5 ♕a7∞.

19...♖fd8 20.d×c5 ♘×c5 (D)



It looks like Black has managed to equalize, but this is not entirely true. White's f3-bishop is a good piece and in general his pieces are a bit better placed. But of course this is not enough; a good plan must be founded.

21.b4!

An excellent move which keeps a nagging edge. The b6-pawn is tagged as a weakness.

21...a×b4 22.♕×b4 ♕a7 23.a3

One could argue that White's a-pawn is also weak, but there is a big difference; Black has no access to the a8-square for any of his rooks to put pressure on it, so White keeps a slight edge.

23...♘f5 24.♖b1! ♖×d1+ 25.♖×d1 ♕c7

25...♕a5 doesn't help too much especially after 26.♖c1!±.

26.♘d3! h6?!

A slight mistake which allows White to increase his advantage. He should either play 26...g6! 27.♔g2 ♘×d3 28.♖×d3± or try to initiate further exchanges with 26...♘×d3 27.♖×d3 ♖d8. But here White also keeps a nice edge with 28.♖c3 ♕d6 29.♕b2.

27.♖c1 ♘e7?!

The immediate 27...♘d6! was better. Karpov comes to the conclusion that his knight is better on d6, but only after losing time. 27...♘×d3? loses to 28.♖×c7 ♖×c7 29.♕e4! ♖c1+ 30.♔g2 ♘e1+ 31.♔h3+−.

28.♕b5 ♘f5

After 28...♕a7 29.♖c3! (29.♘×c5? ♕×a3! [29...b×c5? 30.a4± as White's a-pawn would be very dangerous] 30.♘d3 ♖×c1+ 31.♘×c1 ♕×c1+ 32.♔g2 ♕c8=) 29...♘×d3 30.♖×d3 ♕a5 31.♕×a5 b×a5 32.♖d7 ♘c6 33.♗e2 White keeps a slight but permanent advantage in the endgame, based on his better light piece and his more active rook.

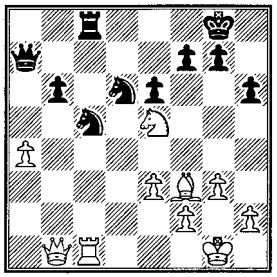
29.a4 ♘d6

Karpov admits his previous inaccuracy.

30.♕b1 ♕a7

After 30...♕d8?!, White wins a pawn: 31.♘×c5 b×c5 (31...♖×c5?! 32.♖×c5 b×c5 33.a5!±) 32.♖d1 c4 33.♕b4 c3 34.♗e4! c2 35.♗×c2 ♖×c2 36.♖×d6.

31.♘e5! (D)

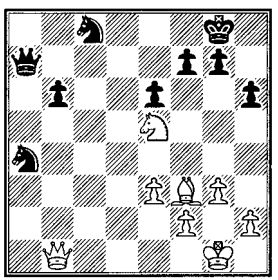


31...♘×a4?

This should have lost on the spot. Also bad was 31...♕×a4?, after which 32.♕×b6 ♕a3!

33.♖d1 ♘f5 (33...♘e8 34.♖d8 ♖×d8 35.♕×d8 ♕a1+ 36.♔g2 ♕×e5 37.♕×e8+ ♔h7 38.♕×f7±) 34.♖d8+ ♖×d8 35.♕×d8+ ♔h7 36.♘×f7 which wins a pawn but leaves White with some technical difficulties to solve: 36...♕a1+ (36...♘d3? 37.♗e2! [37.♗e4? ♘×f2!=] 37...♕a1+ 38.♔g2 ♘e5 39.♗h5! ♘g6 40.♕e8+−; 36...♕c1+? 37.♔g2 ♕c2 [37...♕b2 38.e4 ♘e7 (38...♘e3+ 39.♔h3 ♕×f2 40.♕h8+ ♔g6 41.♘e5+ ♔f6 42.♕f8+ ♔×e5 43.♕×g7+ ♔d6 44.e5#) 39.♕h8+! ♔g6 40.♕e8 ♔h7 41.♗h50] 38.♕h8+ ♔g6 39.♘e5+ ♔f6 40.♘g4+ ♔g6 41.♗c6!+−) 37.♔g2 ♕f6 38.♕f8±. It was better to play 31...♘f5 32.♕b5 (32.♘c6 ♕×a4 33.♕×b6 ♘d3) 32...♘d6 33.♕b4±.

32.♖×c8+ ♘×c8 (D)



33.♕d1?

White in turn misses his way. He should play 33.♕b5! ♔h7 (33...♔f8 34.♘c6 ♕a8 35.♕d3! g6 36.♕d4!+−; 33...♘d6 34.♕c6+−) 34.♘c6 ♕a8 35.♔g2!! and White wins, as the coming ♘e7 wins a piece: 35...♘c5 (35...f5 36.♘e7 ♘d6 37.♕d7+−) 36.♘e7 ♕b8 37.♕e8+−.

33...♘e7?

Black should play 33...♘c5! as after 34.♕d8+ ♔h7 35.♕×c8? (35.♔g2! is better: 35...f6! 36.♘c6 ♕d7 37.♕×d7 ♘×d7 38.♘d8 ♘c5 39.♘×e6! ♘×e6 40.♗g4=; 35.♗d1 f5! 36.♕×c8 ♕a1 37.♕d8=), he gets his piece back with 35...♕a1+ and remains a pawn up. The problem for Black is that he is facing huge time-trouble and this didn't happened by chance; White's pressure forced him to consume time to solve his problems...

34.♕d8+ ♔h7 35.♘×f7

35.♗h5 is possible, but Black can somehow defend with 35...♘c5! (35...f6? 36.♘d7!+−; 35...g6? 36.♕e8! ♘g8 37.♗×g6+ +−) 36.♘×f7 (36.♗×f7? ♕a1+ 37.♔g2 ♕×e5 38.♕×e7 ♕e4+=) 36...♘g8, although White retains the advantage after 37.h4±.

35...♘g6 36.♕e8

36.♘d6 was also possible, but White had to find "more" difficult moves to retain his advantage: 36...♘c5! (36...♕e7 37.♕b8±) 37.♘c8 ♕d7 (37...♕b8 38.♗d1!±; 37...♕a1+ 38.♔g2 b5 39.h4 ♕f6 40.♕d4!±) 38.♕×d7 ♘×d7 39.♗e4 h5 40.♘d6 (40.♘e7 ♘df8) 40...♘df8 41.♗c2! ♔g8 42.♘c8 b5 43.♘a7 b4 44.♘c6±.

36...♕e7

36...♘c5? loses to 37.♗h5 ♕a1+ 38.♔g2 ♕f6 39.f4!+−.

37.♕×a4 ♕×f7 38.♗e4

Now Black is forced to hand over

the b-pawn. So, a long defense in a difficult ending is ahead of him...

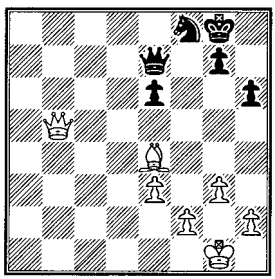
38...♔g8 39.♕b5

39.♗×g6 ♕×g6 40.♕b3± also wins a pawn, but it wouldn't be wise to exchange more pieces in this endgame.

39...♘f8 40.♕×b6

White has finally won a pawn and Black's pawn structure is weak. But the win still looks far away...

40...♕f6 41.♕b5 ♕e7 (D)



42.♔g2

The sealed move. Overnight the entire chess world wondered if White could force a win.

42...g6

Black's other option was 42...g5 43.f4! ♕f6 44.♔h3 (with the idea 45.f×g5 h×g5 46.♔g4) 44...g×f4 45.e×f4± or 42...♕f6 43.h4 g5 44.h5! (44.h×g5 h×g5 45.♕e8±) 44...♕f7 45.g4±.

43.♕a5 ♕g7 44.♕c5 ♕f7 45.h4 h5?!

A horrendous move, given the fact that Karpov and his seconds had the chance to study this endgame overnight. The pawns on are far too weak on g6 and h5 and White can even swap queens now (see the comments below), so Black should have waited with 45...♔g7±.

46.♕c6 ♕e7 47.♗d3 ♕f7 48.♕d6 ♔g7 49.e4

The pawn is *en route* to e5 in order to increase White's control of terrain.

49...♔g8

Or 49...♕b7 50.♔f3! ♕f7+ 51.♔e3 ♕b7 52.♗c4 and Black is in trouble.

50.♗c4 ♔g7 51.♕e5+ ♔g8

After 51...♕f6 White can exchange queens with 52.♕×f6+ ♔×f6 and continue with 53.f4 e5 (53...♔e7 54.e5 ♘d7 55.♗d3 ♔f7 56.♔f3+–) 54.♔f3 ♘d7 55.♔e3 ♘c5 56.♗d5 as the coming ♔d2-c3-c4 seems to win for him. But with the black pawn on h6, this position would be a draw, as Black could exchange on f4 and play ...g5!.

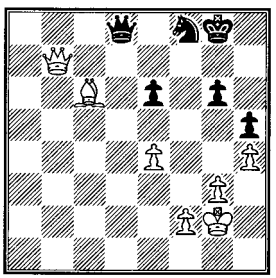
52.♕d6

It is too early for 52.f4?! ♔h7!.

52...♔g7 53.♗b5 ♔g8 54.♗c6 ♕a7 55.♕b4!

55.e5 ♕a5! 56.♗e4 ♕e1 57.♕d3 ♔g7 58.♕d4 was also possible, but the text is more accurate. Anyway, White is in no hurry!

55...♕c7 56.♕b7! ♕d8 (D)



The queen exchange would lead to a winning endgame for White – see the comment to the 51st move.

57.e5!

Placing Black in *zugzwang*. Karpov sat for 45 minutes trying to find a move.

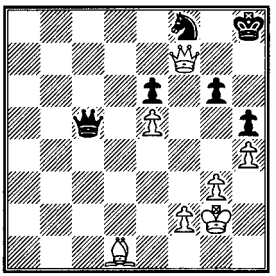
57...♕a5

After 57...♕d3 White plays 58.♗e8 ♕f5 59.♕f3! when the minor piece endgame would be an easy win – the knight cannot even come out of its cage!

58.♗e8 ♕c5 59.♕f7+ ♔h8 60.♗a4! ♕d5+ 61.♔h2 ♕c5

If instead 61...♘h7, 62.♗c2 ♕×e5 63.♕e8+ +−.

62.♗b3 ♕c8 63.♗d1 ♕c5 64.♔g2 1-0 (D)



Black resigned as there is no hope anymore: 64...♕b4 (64...♕c8 65.♗f3 ♕c5 66.♗e4+−) 65.♗f3 ♕c5 66.♗e4 ♕b4 67.f3! (but not 67.♗×g6?? ♘×g6 68.♕×g6 because Black has a stalemate trick with 68...♕b7+ 69.♔h2 ♕g2+!!) 67...♕d2+ 68.♔h3 ♕b4 (or 68...♕h6 69.f4 ♕g7 70.♕×g7+ ♔×g7 71.♗c6+−) 69.♗×g6 ♘×g6 70.♕×g6 ♕×h4+ 71.♔g2! wins. As long as the h5-pawn isn't blocked by a pawn on h4, Black can never create a stalemate. So, in the end Kasparov retained his title! Once more, Karpov didn't make it in the last game...

The next game was played in the last round of the Manila Interzonal. The sporting situation was nicely poised, as Mikhail Gurevich needed a draw to qualify for the candidates cycle, whereas Nigel Short needed a win to qualify! Therefore the French Exchange would appear to be a sensible opening choice by Gurevich. However, as the game proves, it's easy to get into hot water if your only plan is to exchange pieces and try to keep the pawn structure symmetrical. Perhaps in a tense situation an active plan is the best cure for nerves! This is a good example of how not to play in a critical game where you only need a draw:

(220) Gurevich – Short
Manila 1990
French Defense [C01]
(Notes based on those of Nigel Short)

1.d4 e6 2.e4 d5 3.e×d5 e×d5 4.♘f3 ♗g4 5.h3 ♗h5 6.♗e2

Later Kasparov played 6.♕e2+!? against Short and achieved a big advantage after 6...♕e7 7.♗e3 ♘c6 8.♘c3 0-0-0 9.g4 ♗g6 10.0-0-0 f6?! 11.a3 ♕d7 12.♘d2! f5?! (developing with 12...♗d6 13.♘b3 ♘ge7 with a small advantage to White was better) 13.♘b3 ♘f6 14.f3 Kasparov-Short, Tilburg 1991. However, in Gipslis-Mohrlock, corr. 1997, with a slight transposition, Black equalized with 10...♕e8! 11.♘e5 (a violent attempt, but it is neutralized by Black's accurate play) 11... ♗b4 12.♘×g6 h×g6 13.♘b1 ♘f6 14.♗g2 ♘a5 15.c3 ♗d6.

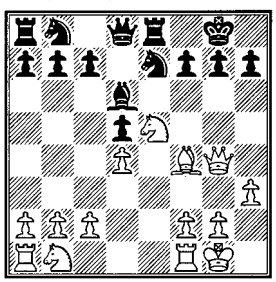
6...♗d6 7.♘e5?!

Much more sensible was 7.0-0.

7...♗×e2 8.♕×e2 ♘e7 9.0-0 0-0 10.♗f4 ♖e8

White has fallen slightly behind in development which allows Black to seize control of the e-file.

11.♕g4 (D)



11...♗×e5!

This is a wise exchange which leaves White with an ineffective bishop.

12.♗×e5

12.d×e5?! ♘g6 13.♖e1 ♘c6

12...♘g6 13.♗g3 ♘d7

After 13...c6 I daresay White would have played 14.♗×b8 to get rid of his inert bishop, although Black still keeps a pleasant game: 14...♖×b8 15.♘d2 ♕b6 16.♖ab1 (16.♘b3 ♖e4 17.♕f3 ♖be8∓) 16...♖e7∓.

14.♘d2 ♘f6 15.♕f3 c6

This threatens 16...♕b6 17.♘b3 ♘e4. White stands worse as a result of the weakness of the e4-square and the fact that his bishop has nothing to attack.

16.♕b3 ♕b6 17.♕×b6 a×b6 18.a3?

In such positions it's vital to use your pawns to create space and potential counterplay. Here Short recommends 18.a4! in order to fix the black pawn on b6. Then a positional attack by Black on the queenside beginning with ...b5, as occurs in the game, would be ruled out, or at least made much harder to implement. Black's alternative plan – an attack along the e file – would also be hindered to some extent by White's perpetual idea of ♗c7, winning the b6-pawn if the black pieces are engaged in action away from the queenside.

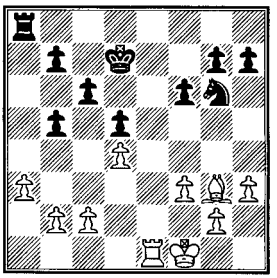
18...♘e4

Now everything runs smoothly for Black. White is soon reduced to complete passivity.

19.♘×e4 ♖×e4 20.♖fd1 b5!

Not giving White a second chance to play a4.

21.♔f1 f6 22.f3 ♖e6 23.♖e1 ♔f7 24.♖×e6 ♔×e6 25.♖e1+ ♔d7 (D)



26.♔e2?

A much better defensive idea was 26.♗h2!, to answer 26...h5 with 27.g4, preventing the white pawns being fixed on the kingside.

26...h5! 27.♔d3 h4 28.♗h2

White now has a vulnerable pawn structure on both wings. Short's play is now a model of how to win such positions.

28...♘e7 29.♗f4 ♘f5 30.♗d2 b6 31.♖e2 c5 32.♗e3 b4!

An excellent clearance sacrifice. Now the black rook will join the battle!

33.a×b4 c4+ 34.♔c3 ♘d6 35.♖e1 ♖a4

This wins the pawn back in view of the threat ...♘b5+.

36.♔d2 ♖×b4 37.♖a1?

White can't stand the slow death any longer. He had to try 37.♔c1 ♖a4 or 37.♖b1 ♖a4. Of course, in both cases Black still stands better.

37...♖×b2 38.♖a7+ ♔e6 39.♖×g7

This counterplay is much too late.

39...b5 40.♗f2?!

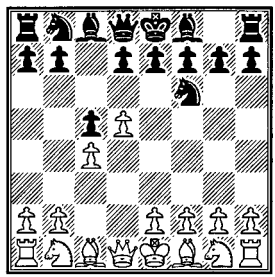
This loses quickly. More stubborn was 40.♖a7 b4∓.

40...b4 41.♔c1 c3 42.♗×h4 ♘f5 0-1

White resigned, as 43.♖g4 ♘e3 is ghastly and Short made it to the next stage!

Our final example was played in the last round of the 1986 Dubai Olympiad. Kasparov was again in a must-win situation, as otherwise the team gold medal would have been won by England.

(221) Schmidt – Kasparov
Dubai 1986
Benko Gambit [A57]
1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 c5 3.d5 (D)



3...b5

In those days the Benko Gambit was played by Kasparov in some games. It suited his aggressive style and had proven a good choice against weaker players. With a 300-piont rating differential, the stronger play can take some additional risks...

4.a4 b4 5.♘d2 g6 6.e4 d6 7.♘gf3

Usually White tries 7.b3!? here and ♗b2, g3, ♗g2 or 7.g3. 7.♗d3 is also possible: 7...e5 8.d×e6 ♗×e6 9.f4 ♘c6 10.♘gf3 ♗h6 11.♘b3∞ Jones-Baeta, Arco 2010.

7...♗g7 8.g3

Now the text move is not accurate. Better is 8.♗d3.

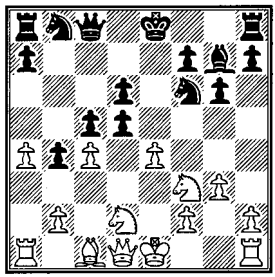
8...e6!

The opening of the center will favor Black, as his pieces can find more active squares. White has problems developing his queenside.

9.♗h3

What else? If 9.♗g2, then 9...e×d5 10.0-0! 0-0! (10...d×e4? 11.♘g5±) 11.c×d5 ♗a6 12.♖e1 ♘bd7∓.

9...e×d5 10.♗×c8 ♕×c8 (D)



11.c×d5?

A bad move. White had to opt for 11.e×d5 ♕h3!? (11...0-0 12.0-0=) 12.♕e2+! (12.♘g5? ♕f5! [12...♕g2 13.♕f3 ♕×f3 14.♘g×f3 0-0 15.h3 ♖e8+ 16.♔d1∓] 13.♕e2+ ♔d7 14.♘ge4 ♘×e4 15.♘×e4 ♖e8 16.f3 ♕e5∓) 12...♔d7 13.♘b3 ♖e8 14.♗e3 ♘e4 15.0-0-0 ♔c7 16.♘fd2=. Now the asymmetrical pawn structure favors the stronger player, especially when he has some good plans to follow – his queenside majority is more active than White's kingside one.

11...0-0

11...♕a6!? 12.♕e2 ♕×e2+ 13.♔×e2 ♘bd7=+

12.0-0 c4!

The majority rolls!

13.♕c2?!

Perhaps a bit better was 13.♕e2 c3 14.b×c3 b×c3 15.♘c4 ♕a6 16.♘d4 ♖e8 17.♘b5 ♖×e4 18.♕a2 ♘e8∓.

13...c3 14.b×c3 b×c3!

There is no need to exchange queens: 14...♕×c3?! 15.♖a2! ♘a6 16.♕b1 ♖fc8 17.♗b2 ♕c2 18.♗×f6 ♕×b1 19.♖×b1 ♗×f6∓.

15.♘b3 ♕g4! 16.♘fd4 ♕×e4 17.♕×c3 ♘×d5

17...♕×d5 18.♗b2 ♘e4 was as good as the text.

18.♕d2 ♘b6!

Black has won a pawn and in the end he already has what he wished for.

19.♖e1 ♕d5 20.♕d1 ♘8d7 21.♖a2 ♗×d4

Also good was 21...♖fe8 22.♗e3 ♘c4−+.

22.♖d2 ♘e5?!

Simpler was 22...♗×f2+! 23.♔×f2 ♕f5+ 24.♔g2 ♖fe8 25.♖×e8+ ♖×e8 26.♖×d6 ♘e5−+.

23.♘×d4 ♘bc4 24.♖c2

24.♖de2? ♕×d4 25.♕×d4 ♘f3+ 26.♔g2 ♘×d4 27.♖e4 ♘c2 28.♖1e2 ♘2a3 -+

24...♖ac8 25.♖c3

25.♗e3?! ♘×e3 26.f×e3 ♘f3+! -+

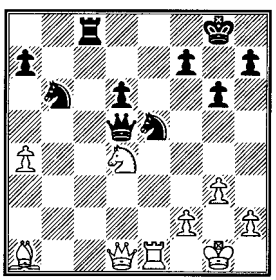
25...♘b6

Why not 25...♕a5 26.♖c2 ♕×a4−+?

26.♗b2 ♖×c3 27.♗×c3 ♖c8

27...♕c4 28.♗a1 ♘×a4 -+

28.♗a1 (D)



28...♖c4?!

After Black quickly won a pawn and the initiative, he relaxed too much and now he has even lost some of his advantage, which he could have maintained with 28...♘bd7∓ or 28...a5∓.

29.♘b5! ♖×a4

If 29...♘f3+?, then 30.♕×f3!+− and if 29...♖e4, White defends with 30.♖f1!=.

30.♕×d5 ♘×d5 31.♗×e5

Maybe White should consider 31.♔g2 after which Black would have to find some accurate moves: 31...f6! 32.♘×d6 ♘d3! 33.♖d1 ♘3b4 34.♗d4 a5∓.

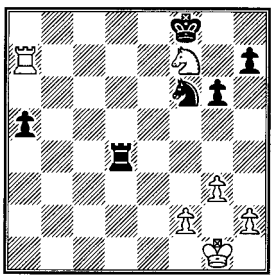
31...d×e5 32.♖×e5 ♘f6 33.♖e7 a5 34.♘d6

34.♖a7 ♘e4!∓ was good for Black.

34...♖d4!

Black had to win the game "again," and he does it in a great way! Probably this is the only move to do so!

35.♘×f7 ♔f8 36.♖a7 (D)



36...♖d7!

The transition to a knight ending is the best way to convert the advantage. The outside black a-pawn will be a decisive factor.

37.♖×d7 ♘×d7 38.♘d6 ♔e7 39.♘c4 a4 40.♔f1 ♔e6 41.♔e2 ♔d5 42.♘e3+

If 42.♘a3, 42...♔d4 wins and the pawn ending; 42.♔d3 ♘e5+ 43.♘×e5 ♔×e5 is also won for Black.

42...♔d4 43.♔d2

43.♘c2+ ♔c3 44.♘a3 ♘f6 45.f4 ♘e4! 46.g4 ♘d6 -+

43...♘e5 44.♔c2 ♘d3

44...♔e4 also wins: 45.f4 ♘f3 46.♘f1 (46.♘g4 h5 47.♘f2+ ♔e3 48.♘d3 ♘×h2 49.♘e5 ♘f1 50.♘×g6 ♘×g3 51.♔c3 ♔e4 52.♔b4 ♔f5−+) 46...h5 47.♔c3 a3 48.♔b3 ♔d3−+.

45.♘d1 ♘e1+ 46.♔b2 ♘f3! 47.h4 ♘e5!

Kasparov plays this ending like a machine! 47...♔d3? would be wrong in view of 48.♘e3 ♔e2 49.h5! g×h5 50.♘d5! ♔×f2 51.♘f4 h4 52.g×h4 ♘×h4

53.♘h5 when White draws!

48.♔a3 ♔e4 49.h5 g×h5! 50.♘e3

If 50.♔×a4, then Black wins by 50...♔f3 51.♔b3 ♘d3 52.♔c2 ♘×f2 53.♘c3 ♘h1!−+.

50...♔f3 51.♘d5 ♘g4! 52.♘e7

52.♘f4 h4 53.♘h3 ♘×f2 -+

52...♘×f2 53.♘f5 ♘e4 54.♔×a4 ♘×g3 55.♘h4+ ♔e4 56.♔b4 ♘f5 0-1

And White resigned, giving the gold medal to the Soviet Union team! A real disappointment for the English squad!

Conclusion

Knowing how to treat critical games is an important asset for an ambitious chessplayer. Kasparov is considered to be the greatest player of all time and he really knew very well what to do in such situations. Playing good moves helps a lot, but there are many other things that a chessplayer should be trained to do, and playing critical games is one of them.

Strength of a Novelty

Concept

Opening preparation plays a vital part in the everyday working program of strong chessplayers. Usually this preparation does not target a certain opponent, but the problems and secrets of certain positions in question. A well-prepared chessplayer should try to create a logical repertoire, according to his needs and his preference in certain types of positions in the coming middlegame. The opening phase is a passing phase and it is just one way to the most important part of the game, the middlegame.

With the above in mind, we should focus on achieving "pleasant middlegames." This meaning is double-edged as there is a decent chance that both opponents will achieve it! Of course, players with different styles of play cannot be both happy!

A chessplayer working on his opening repertory and on certain variations, should try:

1. To collect and study everything that exists on the theoretical base.
2. To understand the various positional and tactical elements.
3. To study possible endgames.
4. To study illustrative games.
5. To create new ideas, plans and moves of a good value.

The last one is the most difficult in theory and in praxis, but usually it is the one that produces the wins. It is probably impossible or very nearly so to find a strong novelty that can change the evaluation of a particular position quickly. But it is a good probability that in every position a new plan can be found.

This plan normally is guided by certain moves leading to new positions. The careful study of these positions will give us certain superiority over our opponent who will find himself in completely new territory. He will have to spend valuable time without any guarantee that he will be able to find the best answers. Thus he will get a great practical advantage over the board.

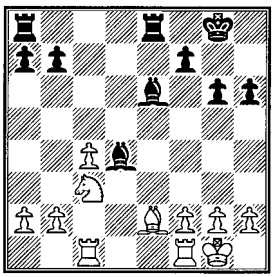
(222) Grivas – Jadoul

Dubai 1986

King's Indian Defense [E74]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0-0 6.♗g5 c5 7.d5 h6 8.♗f4 e6 9.d×e6 ♗×e6

10.♗×d6 ♖e8 11.♘f3 ♘c6 12.0-0 ♘d4 13.e5 ♘d7 14.♘×d4 c×d4 15.♕×d4 ♘×e5 16.♗×e5 ♕×d4 17.♗×d4 ♗×d4 18.♖ac1 (D)



This is a well-known (at least for KID players) pawn sacrifice, which according to theory leads to a drawish endgame. Of course, both sides can avoid this continuation, choosing alternatives on previous moves.

18...♖ad8

18...a5 did not fare well after 19.♖fd1 ♗×c3 20.♖×c3 b5 21.c×b5 ♗×a2 22.♔f1± Grivas-Nikolic, Cap d'Agde 1983.

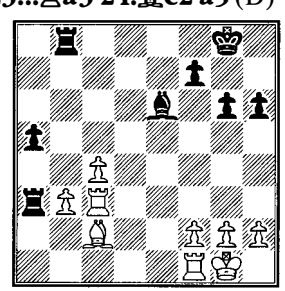
19.b3 ♗×c3 20.♖×c3 ♖d2 21.♗f3 ♖×a2 22.♗×b7 ♖b8

Accurate. 22...a5?! 23.c5± Likavsky-Helbich, Slovakia 1998.

23.♗e4

23.♗f3 was not much for White after 23...♖a3 24.♗d1 a5 25.♖c1 ♖c8 26.♖e1 a4 27.b×a4 ♖×c4 28.♖×c4 ♗×c4 29.♗c2 ♗d5 30.h4 ♗c6 31.♖d1 ♖a2 32.♗b3 ♖a3 33.♖d6 ♖×b3 34.♖×c6 ♖b1+ 35.♔h2 ♖b4 ½-½ in Polugaevsky-Kasparov, Bugojno 1982.

23...♖a3 24.♗c2 a5 (D)



Instead of the text move, White has tried to get more with some other moves, but in vain:

(a) 25.f4 a4 26.f5 ♗×f5! (26...g×f5? 27.♖g3+ ♔f8 28.b×a4 ♖×g3 29.h×g3 ♖b2 [29...♗×c4 30.♖×f5 ♗b3 31.♗×b3 ♖×b3 32.♖f3 ♖b6 33.♖a3 ♖a6 34.a5 ♔e7 35.♔f2 ♔e6 36.♔e3 ♔d5 37.♔f4 ♖f6+ 38.♔g4 ♖a6 39.♔f5 ♔c4 40.g4 ♔b4 41.♖a1 ♔c3 42.♖c1+ ♔d4 43.♖d1+ ♔e3 44.♖a1 ♔d4 45.g3 ♔e3 46.♖a4 ♔f3 47.♖a3+ ♔g2 48.g5 h5 49.♔e5 ♔h3 50.♔d4 ♔g4 51.♔c4 ♖a8 52.♔b5 h4 53.g×h4 ♔×h4 54.♖f3 ♖a7 55.♖f5 1-0 Grivas-Kourkounakis, Khania 1982] 30.♗×f5 ♗×f5 31.♖×f5 ♖b4 32.a5 ♖×c4 33.♖f4 ♖c6 34.♖a4 ♖a6 35.♔f2± Uhlmann-Sznapik, Zinnowitz 1981) 27.♗×f5 g×f5 28.♖g3+ (½-½ Lukacs-Polgar,J Budapest 1991) 28...♔f8 29.b×a4 ♖×a4 30.♖c1 ♖b2 31.c5 ♖aa2 32.c6 ♖c2 33.♖×c2 ♖×c2 34.♖f3 ♖×c6 35.♖×f5 ♖c2 36.♖f2 ♖c1+ 37.♖f1 ♖c2 38.♖f2 ½-½ Grivas-Gavrilakis, Iraklion 1983.

(b) 25.♖g3 ♖a2! (25...a4? 26.b×a4 ♖a2 [26...♖×g3 27.h×g3 ♗×c4 28.♖b1± Löffler-Rudolf, Germany 2004] 27.♖c3 ♖bb2 28.♗d3 ♖×a4 29.c5± Stuart-McLaren, Auckland 1997) 26.♖c3 (26.♗d1? a4 27.b×a4 ♗×c4 28.♖e1 ♖b1−+) 26...♖a3=.

25...♔g7

It seems that Black has difficulties even with the alternatives:

(a) 25...♗f5? 26.♗d1 ♖d8 27.h3 ♗d3 28.♖fe1 ♖a1 29.c5± Alburt-Timoshchenko, Beltsy 1977.

(b) 25...a4? 26.b×a4 ♖×e3 27.f×e3 ♖b2 28.♖c1 ♗×c4 29.♗e4! (29.♗×g6 ♗b3 30.♖b1 [30.♗h5 ♖a2 31.♗f3 ♖×a4 32.♔f2 ♔g7 33.♖c5 ♗e6 34.e4 ♖c4 35.♖a5 ♖b4 36.♔e3 ♖c4 37.♔f4 ♖b4 38.h4 ♖b2 39.♖a7 ♖a2 40.♖e7 ♖b2 ½-½ Maksimovic-Klundt,

Wuerzburg 1989] 30...♖×b1+ 31.♗×b1 ♗×a4= Muse-Klundt, Germany 1985) 29...♗e6 30.♖a1 ♗c4 31.a5 ♗a6 32.♗d5±.

(c) 25...♖d8? 26.h3 ♖d2 27.♖c1 ♔f8 28.♗e4 ♖d4 29.♗×g6 a4 30.b×a4 ♖×a4 31.c5 ♖ac4 32.♖×c4 ♖×c4 33.♖e5± Farago-Nagle, Budapest 2004. But this is not quite true. With...

(d) 25...♖a2! (proposed by grandmaster Rainer Knaak as the best) 26.♗×g6 ♖b2! (26...a4?! 27.b×a4 ♗×c4 28.♗b1 ♖ab2 29.♗d3 ♗×d3 30.♖×d3 ♖a2 31.g3 [31.h3 ♖×a4 32.♖c1 ♖ab4 33.♖g3+± Uhlmann-Schmidt, Warsaw 1980] 31...♖×a4 32.♖e1 ♖a6 33.♖e2 ♔g7 34.♔g2± [with one pair of rooks this position is a certain draw, but with the presence of all four rooks White has excellent winning chances, as he can put more pressure on Black's weak pawn-structure] 34...♖ab6 35.♖dd2 ♖b3 36.f4 ♖8b5 37.♔h3 ♖h5+ 38.♔g4 ♖hb5 39.♔h4 ♖3b4 40.h3 ♔g6 41.♖d6+ ♔g7 42.♖e3 ♖b3 43.♖e7 ♖b7 44.♖×b7 ♖×b7 45.f5 ♖b4+ 46.♔h5 ♖b3 47.h4 ♖f3 48.g4 ♖h3 49.f6+ ♔h7 50.♖d7 ♔g8 51.♖d8+ ♔h7 52.♖f8 1-0 Bareev-Watson,W Sochi 1988) 27.♗e4 ♖8×b3 28.♖a1 ♗×c4 29.♖×b3 ♗×b3 30.♖×a5 ♖a2 31.♖×a2 ♗×a2 32.f4 f6 33.♔f2 ♔f7 ½-½ Bareev-Akopian, Moscow 1989 and Black should be satisfied.

26.♖c1!

This looks like the best, as other option are clearly pleasant for Black:

(a) 26.h3?! ♖a2! (26...♖c8? 27.♖b1 a4 28.b×a4 ♖×e3 29.f×e3 ♖×c4 30.♗d1 ♖c3 31.♖a1 ♗c4 [31...♖×e3 32.a5 ♗d5 33.a6 ♖g3 34.♗f3 ♗×f3 35.♔f2 ♖×g2+ 36.♔×f3+−] 32.♔f2 ♖d3 33.♗f3 ♖d2+ 34.♔e1 ♖b2 35.a5 ♗a6 36.♗d5± Seirawan-Benjamin, Los Angeles 1991; 26...♖d8? 27.♖c1 ♖d2 28.♔f1 ♖a2 29.♖e2 ♖d8 30.♔e1 a4 31.♗d1 a×b3 32.♗×b3 ♖×e2+ 33.♔×e2 ♔f6 34.♔e3 g5 35.♗a4± Toth-Iskov, Oslo 1978) 27.♖c1 ♖b4 28.♗d1 a4 29.b×a4 ♖×c4 30.♖×c4 ♗×c4=.

(b) 26.♖fe1? ♖a2 27.♖c3 ♖a3 28.f4 a4 29.f5 g×f5 30.♖g3+ ♔f6 31.b×a4 ♖×g3 32.h×g3 ♗×c4 33.♖b1 ♖e8 34.♖b4 ♖e1+ 35.♔h2 ♗d5 36.♖f4 ♖e2 37.♗×f5 ♖×g2+ 38.♔h3 ♖d2 39.♗e4+ ♔g7 40.♗×d5 ♖×d5 41.♔g4 h5+ 42.♔f3 ♖d3+ 43.♔f2 ♖a3 44.♖b4 ♔g6 ½-½ Lukacs-Sznapik, Lodz 1978.

26.♖c1 was then my "novelty," one that I had researched in depth during my preparations. And indeed I was really happy that I was given the opportunity to use it in such an important event as the Dubai 1986 Olympiad, where I represented my country. This game was in the match against Belgium.

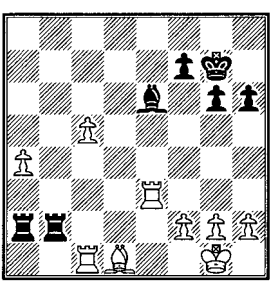
26...♖a2!

Black again must be accurate. Worse is 26...♖d8?! 27.♔f1 ♖c8 28.♔e1 ♖c5 29.♔d2 ♖a2 30.♔c3 a4 31.♖×e6! f×e6 32.b×a4 ♖a5 33.c5!± Zaichik-Rodriguez Cespedes, Tbilisi 1977. Actually one should call 26...♖a2! the real novelty, but I had no clue about the above game.

27.♗d1!

White even lost after the over-ambitious 27.c5? a4 28.b4 (28.b×a4 ♖×c2) 28...♖×b4 29.♗d3 ♖b7∓ Raetsky-Schebler, Germany 2000.

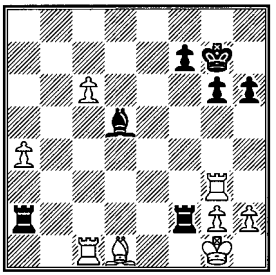
27...a4 28.b×a4♖bb2 29.c5 (D)



29...♗d5!

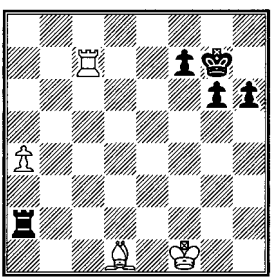
No help is 29...♖×f2? 30.♗f3! ♖fc2 31.♖×c2 ♖×c2 32.c6 ♖a2 33.♖e4 and White will win.

30.c6 ♖×f2 31.♖g3 (D)



31...♖fd2?

A losing move in time trouble (Black had to find a lot of good moves over the board). Black had to enter the following line: 31...♖×g2+ 32.♖×g2 ♖×g2+ 33.♔f1 ♖×h2 34.c7 ♗e6 35.c8♕ ♗×c8 36.♖×c8 ♖a2 37.♖c7 (D)

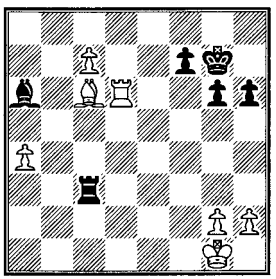


This is the position that I had in mind in my preparations. Although I spent an overwhelming amount of time on it, I did not come to a clear conclusion. Black's three united passed pawns can become really dangerous. On the other hand, White is a piece up and for his part also has a passed pawn. As I felt that I had many winning chances and few losing ones, I decided that this was a nice position to have. No surprises in the opening, plenty of time to think about and much needed information obtained before-hand! Do not ask me for variations; there are many and probably we could fill two or three pages with them; surely this is a subject for some other survey!

32.c7 ♗b7 33.♗f3! ♗a6 34.♗c6

Now Black is lost. Wrong would be 34.c8♕? ♗×c8 35.♖×c8? ♖a1+.

34...♖ac2 35.♖c3 ♖d1+ 36.♖×d1 ♖×c3 37.♖d6! (D)



Black's king cannot be a part of the battle, as apposed to his counterpart that is about to enter the fray. The rest of the game seemed to be quite easy:

37...♖c5 38.♔f2 ♖c3 39.♔e1 g5 40.♔d2 ♖c4 41.♗d5 ♖c5 42.♖×a6 ♖×d5+ 43.♔e3 ♖c5 44.♖a7 ♔g6 45.a5 f5 46.♖b7 f4+ 47.♔d4 ♖c1 48.a6 1-0

(223) Petursson – Grivas
Katerini 1993
King's Indian Defense [E73]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.♘c3 ♗g7 4.e4 d6 5.♗e2 0-0 6.♗g5 ♘a6 7.♕d2 e5 8.d5 ♕e8 9.♗d1

As usual, White can has several other options:

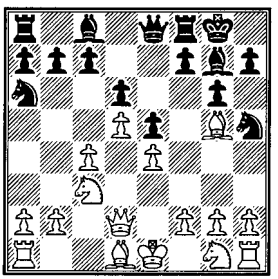
(a) 9.h4 ♘c5 10.♗×f6 (10.f3? ♘h5! ×g3; 10.♗f3 a5 11.h5 ♘×h5 12.♗×h5 g×h5 13.0-0-0 [13.♖×h5? f6−+] 13...f5 14.f3 ♕g6 15.♖e1 a4 16.♘h3 b6 17.♘f2 ♗a6 18.♘b5 ♗×b5 19.c×b5 ♖a5!∓ Beck-Bode, Schoeneck 1991) 10...♗×f6 11.♘f3 (11.h5 a5 12.♕e3 ♕e7 13.♘h3 ♗d7 14.b3 ♗g7 15.h×g6 ½-½ Kaidanov-Schlosser, Austria

1991) 11...a5 12.0-0-0 ♗g7 13.h5 f5 14. h×g6 ♕×g6∞ Piket-Polgar, Aruba 1995.

(b) 9.f3 ♘h5 10.♗d1 (10.♗d3 f5 [10...♘f4 11.♗c2 ♘b4] 11.♘ge2 f4!? [11...♗d7 12.e×f5 (12.0-0-0 f4 13.♗h4 g5! 14.♗f2 g4 15.♔b1 ♘f6 16.♘c1 g×f3 17.g×f3 ♕h5 18.♗e2 ♗h3∞ Dao Thien Hai-Videki, Budapest 1996) 12...g×f5 13.0-0 ♘c5 14.♗c2 a5 15.♖ae1 ♕g6 16.♗e3= Serper-Korotylev, St Petersburg 1993] 12.♗h4 [12.0-0-0 ♗f6] 12...g5! [12...♗f6 13.♗f2] 13.♗f2 [13.♗×g5? ♕g6 14.♗h4 ♕×g2] 13...g4 14.0-0-0 ♔h8 15.♔b1 ♗f6 16.♘c1 g×f3 17.g×f3 ♕e7 18.♘b5 c5 19.d×c6 b×c6 20.♘c3 ♘g7! 21.♗e2 ♖d8 22.♘b3 ♘e6 23.♖hg1 ♘ac5 24.♘×c5 d×c5 25.♕e1 ♘d4 26.♘a4 ♗e6 27.♗×d4 c×d4 28.♕a5 ♖g8 29.♘c5 ♗f7 30.b4 ♖g6 31.♖×g6 h×g6 32.♖g1 ♔g7 33.♔c2 ♖h8 34.♖g2 ♖b8 35.a3 ♖h8 36.♔d2 ½-½ Dao Thien Hai-David, Wijk aan Zee 1997; 10.g4? ♘f4! 11.♗×f4 e×f4 12.♕×f4 f5 13.e×f5 g×f5 14.g5 ♘c5 15.♔f1 ♗e5 16.♕d2 f4 17.♖e1 a5 18.h4 ♗f5 19.♘h3 ♕g6 20.♘f2 ♔h8∓ Buckley-Fishbein, Philadelphia 1991) 10...f5 11.♘ge2 ♗d7 (11...f×e4 12.♘×e4 [12.f×e4 ♕f7 13.♗e3 ♘f4 14.♘g3 h5 with counterplay] 12...♘f4 13.0-0 ♕f7 [13...♗f5 14.♗c2 ♘×e2+ 15.♕×e2 ±] 14.♗c2 h6 15.♗h4 g5 16.♗f2 b6∞) 12.a3 (12.♗c2 ♘b4 [12...♔h8 13.♗e3 ♘b4 14.♗b1 a5 15.a3 ♘a6 16.b3 b6 17.♗c2 ♘c5 18.♖b1 f×e4 19.♘×e4 ♘×e4 20.♗×e4 ♘f6 21.♘c3 ♗f5∞ Kummer-Freitag, Hartberg 2003] 13.♗b1 a5 14.a3 [14.e×f5 g×f5 15.0-0 ♔h8 16.a3 ♘a6 17.♗c2 ♖g8 18.f4 ♕g6∓ Bönsch-Langheinrich, Germany 2005] 14...♘a6 15.♗c2 f4 16.♗h4 g5 17.♗f2 g4 18.0-0-0 ♔h8 19.♔b1 ♘f6 20.♘c1 ♕h5∞ Farago-Tratar, Maribor 1994) 12...♗f6 13.♗e3 f4 14.♗f2 ♕e7 15.♗c2 ♗h4 16.g3 ♗g5 17.g4 ♘g3 18.h×g3 f×g3 19.♗e3 g2 20.♖h3 ♗h4+ 21.♗f2 ♗×f2+ 22.♔×f2 ♗×g4 23.♕h6 ♗×h3 24.♕×h3 ♕g5 25.♕g3 ♕d2 26.♖c1 ♖f7 27.♘b1 g1♕+ 28.♕×g1 ♖×f3+ 29.♔×f3 ♖f8+ 30.♔g3 ♕×e2 31.♘c3 ♖f3+ 0-1 Yakovich-Nadyrhanov, Smolensk 1997.

(c) 9.♘f3 ♘h5 10.g3 f5∞ Gulko-Djurhuus, Manila 1992.

9...♘h5 (D)



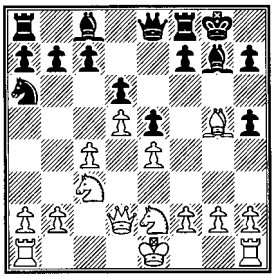
Also not bad is 9...♗d7 10.♘ge2 ♘h5 (10...h5 11.0-0 ♘c5 12.♗c2 a5 13.♖ae1 ♖a6 14.b3± Petursson-Prié, Reykjavik 1993) 11.♘g3 ♘f4 12.0-0 ♘c5 13.♗c2 a5 14.a4! (14.♗×f4 e×f4 15.♕×f4 b5 16.c×b5 ♗×b5∞/=) 14...♕b8!? 15.♖ab1 (15.♗×f4 e×f4 16.♕×f4 ♕a **[check]**∞/=) 15...♕a7= Yusupov-Nikolaidis, Yerevan 1996.

10.♗×h5?!

In my opinion White should continue with 10.♗a4! ♗d7 11.♗×d7 ♕×d7 12.♘ge2 f5 13.f3 ♘c5 14.b4 ♘a4 15.0-0 a5 16.a3 ♘f6 17.♖ab1 ♘×c3 18.♘×c3 b6 19.♖fc1± Heinig-Schenk, Bad Woerishofen 2001, but who can resist shattering the opponent's pawn structure?

10...g×h5 11.♘ge2 (D)

Or 11.♘f3 f5 12.e×f5 ♗×f5 13.♘h4 ♗d7 (13...♘c5 14.♘×f5 ♖×f5 15.0-0 ♕g6 16.♗e3 ♖af8 17.♖ad1± Leitao-Gormally, Mermaid Beach 1998) 14.f3 ♘c5∞.



11...f6!

This was a strong novelty then. To my knowledge, White never again tried 10.♗×h5?! after this game. Until this game, Black had replied 11...f5?! 12.e×f5 ♗×f5 13.♘g3 and now:

(a) 13...e4 14.♗h6! (14.0-0 ♕g6 15.♗e3 ♖ae8 16.♔h1 [16.♘×f5!? ♖×f5 17.♔h1] 16...♗d7 [16...h4 17.♘×f5 ♖×f5 18.f3 e×f3 19.g×f3 ♕h5 20.f4±] 17.f3 e×f3 18.g×f3 ∞ Petursson-Glek, Belgrade 1988) 14...♘c5 15.0-0 a5 16.♗×g7 ♔×g7 17.f3!±.

(b) 13...♗g6 14.0-0 (14.♘ge4 ♘c5) 14...♘c5 15.f3 ♘d3 16.♘ge4±.

(c) 13...♕g6 14.♘×f5 (14.f3 ♗d3!∞) 14...♖×f5 15.♗e3± Chumachenko-Fedorov, Pinsk 1993 (15...♕×g2 16.0-0-0∞/=).

Black's idea is simple. Before he surrenders the e4-square (with ...f5), he should first exchange some pieces and gain control over it.

12.♗h6

Alternatives can be good only for Black: 12.♗h4? ♕g6 13.♘g3? ♕g4; 12.♗e3 h4! not allowing the e2-knight to get to g3, and then he can calmly continue with ...f5.

12...♗×h6 13.♕×h6 ♕g6! 14.♕d2

After 14.♕×g6+ h×g6 Black can feel fully satisfied. His good c8-bishop has stayed in the game and he has at his disposal various plans as ...c6 and ...f5.

14...f5

Only now! (14...♕×g2? 15.♖g1).

15.f3

After 15.e×f5 White's position can easily become critical: 15...♗×f5 16.♘g3?! (16.0-0 ♗h3 17.♘g3 ♗×g2 18.♔×g2 h4∞) 16...♗c2! (16...♗d3 17.0-0-0 ♗×c4 18.b3 h4 19.b×c4 [19.♘ge4 ♗b5] 19...h×g3 20.h×g3 ♘c5∞) 17.♖c1 ♘b4∓.

15...b6

Preparing ...♘c5.

16.e×f5 ♗×f5 17.♘g3 ♗d7

17...♘c5 18.♘×f5 ♕×f5 19.0-0 a5=

18.0-0?!

White had to try 18.0-0-0∞.

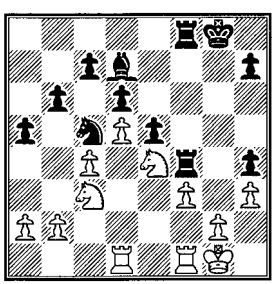
18...h4?!

Black missed 18...♖f4! 19.♘ge4 ♖af8 20.♔h1 ♘c5 21.♖fe1 h4 22.h3 ♗f5=+

19.♘ge4 ♘c5

19...♖f4!?

20.♕g5 ♕×g5 21.♘×g5 a5 22.♖ad1 ♖f4 23.♘ge4 ♖af8 24.h3 (D)



24...♘×e4

More precise was 24...♗f5! 25.♖fe1 (25.♘e2 ♘×e4 26.♘×f4 ♘g3∓) 25...♗×e4 26.♘×e4 ♘×e4 27.♖×e4 ♖×e4 28.f×e4=.

25.f×e4 ♔g7 26.♖×f4 ♖×f4 27.♖f1 ♖×f1+ 28.♔×f1 ♔f6

This is a drawish endgame. White tried till the end to create some winning chances but Black responded with accuracy (although it was not that difficult).

29.♔f2 ♔g5 30.♔e3 ♗e8 31.b3 ♗d7 32.♘d1 ♗e8 33.♘f2 ♗d7 34.♘d3 ♗e8 35.b4 a×b4 36.♘×b4 ♔f6 37.♘a6 c5 38.d×c6 ♗×c6 39.♘b4 ♗b7 40.a4

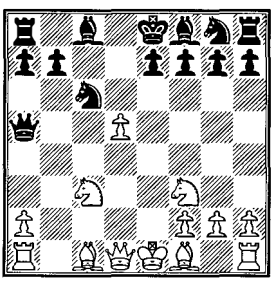
40.♘d5+ ♗×d5 41.c×d5 b5=

40...♔g5 41.♔f3 ♔f6 42.♘c2 ♗c8 43.♔e3 ♗e6 44.♘a3 ♔e7 45.♔d3 ♔d7 46.♘b1 ♔c6 47.♘d2 ♔c5 48.♔c3 ♗f7 49.♘b3+ ♔c6 50.a5 b×a5 51.♘×a5+ ♔b6 52.♘b3 ♗g6 53.♔d3 ♔c6 54.♘d2 ♔c5 55.♘f3 ♗f7 56.♘×h4 ♗×c4+ 57.♔e3 d5 58.e×d5 ½-½

The third example is an impressive one; "short and sweet!"

(224) Yilmaz – Grivas
Nea Makri 1990
Sicilian Defense [B30]

1.e4 c5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.b4?! c×b4 4.d4 d5 5.e×d5 ♕×d5 6.c4 b×c3 7.♘×c3 ♕a5 8.d5? (D)



Back in 1990 I had to face the Turkish IM in a zonal tournament (preliminaries of the world championship). As my opponent was a sharp player, fond of sacrifices and gambits, I should not have expected anything else than a sideline of a Sicilian Defense. As I was analyzing this particular position something "strange" hit me!

8...e6!

An excellent novelty!

(a) 8...♕×c3+? 9.♗d2 ♕a3 (9...♕f6 10.d×c6 b×c6 11.♗a5 ♗g4 12.♗e2 ♘h6 13.0-0∞/= e5? 14.♘×e5 ♗×e2? 15.♕d7# 1-0 Csapo-Szilardfy, Budapest 2005) 10.d×c6 b×c6 11.♕c2 ♕d6 (11...♗d7 12.♖b1 e5 13.♖b3 ♕e7 14.♗c4 f6 15.0-0∞/= ♘h6 16.♖fb1 ♕d8 17.♗×h6 g×h6 18.♖d1 ♕c7 19.♘h4 ♗g4 20.♖db1 ♖d8 21.h3 ♗c8 22.♘g6 h×g6 23.♕×g6+ ♔e7 24.♕f7+ 1-0 Steinbacher-Wenzel, Germany 1994) 12.♗f4 ♕b4+ 13.♗d2 ♕d6 14.♗e2 ♘f6 15.0-0 ♘d5 16.♖fd1 e6 17.♘e5∞/= ♗e7 18.♘×c6 0-0 19.♗b4 ♘×b4 20.♖×d6 ♘×c2 21.♘×e7+ ♔h8 22.♖b1 a5 23.♗f3 ♖a7 24.♘×c8 (24...♖×c8 25.♖c6) 1-0 Yilmaz-Veinger, Kusadasi 1990.

(b) 8...♘f6? 9.♗b2! (9.d×c6? ♕×c3+ 10.♗d2 ♕×c6 11.♖c1 ♕d6 12.♖c3 e6 13.♕c1 ♗d7∓ Husak-Hlavac, Tatranska Lomnica 1997) 9...♘b8 10.♗d3∞/=.

(c) 8...♘b8? 9.♗d2 ♘f6 10.♗c4 (10.♖c1 ♕d8 11.♘e5 a6 12.♕a4+± Llorens-Sepulveda, Santiago 2005) 10...g6 11.♘e4 ♕c7 12.♗b5+ ♗d7 13.♖c1 ♕d8 14.♘×f6+ e×f6 15.♕e2+ ♗e7 16.d6 0-0 17.d×e7 ♕×e7 18.♕×e7 ♖e8 19.♕×e8+ 1-0 Schnurr-Prange, Schloss Schney 1992.

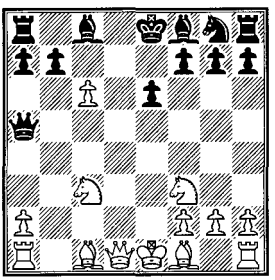
(d) 8...e5? 9.d×c6 ♗b4 10.♗d2 (10.♗d3 ♗×c3+ 11.♗d2 b×c6 12.0-0 ♗×d2 13.♘×d2 ♗e6∓ Gaillard-Franc, Bethune 2005) 10...♗×c3 11.♖c1 ♗×d2+ 12.♕×d2 ♕×d2+ 13.♔×d2=.

(e) 8...♗g4? 9.♗d2 (9.d×c6 ♕×c3+ 10.♗d2 ♕×c6 11.♖c1 ♗×f3 12.g×f3 ♕e6+ 13.♗e3 ♘f6 14.♗b5+ ♘d7 15.♖c7 1-0 Basanta-Wu, Vancouver 2003) 9...♗×f3 (9...♘e5 10.♘×e5 ♗×d1 11.♗b5+ ♔d8 12.♘×f7+ ♔c8 13.♖c1 +−) 10.g×f3 ♘e5 11.♘b5 ♕b6 12.♕a4+−.

As becomes obvious, White should

feel satisfied playing these positions, as it seems that he has at least an unclear position to handle. But after the text move his whole plan becomes suspicious.

9.d×c6 (D)



The main alternative is 9.♗d2 ♗b4 (9...e×d5?! 10.♗b5 ♗b4 11.♘×d5 ♗×d2+ 12.♕×d2 ♕×d2+ 13.♔×d2 ♔f8 14.♗×c6 b×c6 15.♘c7 ♖b8 16.♖ab1 ♖×b1 17.♖×b1 ♘e7 18.♖b8 g6 19.♖a8= Bereza-Schebler, Dos Hermanas 2004) 10.♕c1 (10.♖c1 e×d5∓) 10...e×d5 11.a3 ♗d6 12.♗b5 (12.♘b5 ♕d8 13.♗f4 ♗b8 14.♗×b8 ♖×b8 15.♕f4 ♕f6!−+ Goumas-Katsiris, Athens 2003) 12...♘ge7 13.♘e4 ♕d8 14.♘×d6+ ♕×d6 15.♗b4 ♕f6 16.0-0 0-0 17.♗×c6 b×c6 18.♖e1 ♖e8∓ Shirazi-Bonin, New York 1990.

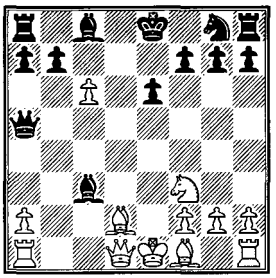
9...♗b4! 10.♗d2

10.c×b7 ♗×c3+ 11.♗d2 (11.♘d2 ♗×b7 12.♖b1 ♗c6 13.♖b3 ♘f6 14.♕c2 ♘e4 15.♗b5 ♗×b5 16.♕×e4 0-0 17.♕e3 ♖ac8 18.♖b1 ♖fd8 0-1 Stanton-Koshy, London 1993) 11...♗×d2+ 12.♕×d2 ♕×d2+ 13.♔×d2 ♗×b7 14.♗b5+ ♔e7 15.♖hc1 ♗d5 16.♖c7+ ♔f6∓ Klipper-Bertrand, Montlucon 1997.

10...♗×c3 (D)

11.♕c1

White is unable to find a proper move and probably he had already "understood" his future... As 11.c×b7 trans-

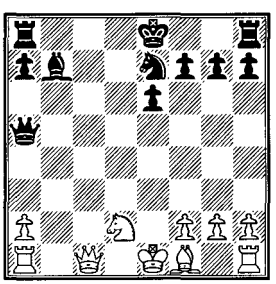


poses to the previous note, the other options are:

(a) 11.♗e2 ♗×d2+ 12.♘×d2 ♘e7 13.0-0 0-0 14.♘c4 (14.c×b7 ♗×b7 15.♗f3 ♖ad8 16.♕b1 ♖×d2 17.♕×b7 ♘g6 18.a4 ♘e5 19.♖fc1 ♖fd8 20.♖c8 ♘×f3+ 21.g×f3 ♖×c8 22.♕×c8+ ♖d8 23.♖c1 g6 24.♕c7 0-1 Hvenekilde-Nilssen, Tastrup 2000) 14...♕g5 15.c7 ♘d5 16.♗f3 ♘×c7 17.♕d6 ♘b5 18.♕b4 ♘d4 19.♗e4 e5 20.♔h1 ♗e6 21.♘e3 f5 22.♗d5 ♗×d5 23.♘×d5 ♘c2 0-1 Tempone-Scarella, Chaco 1996.

(b) 11.♖c1 ♗×d2+ 12.♘×d2 ♘f6 13.♗d3 (13.c×b7 ♗×b7 14.♕b3 ♖d8?! [14...♕e5+ 15.♔d1 ♖b8−+] 15.♕b5+ ♕×b5 16.♗×b5+ ♔f8 17.♖c7 ♗×g2?! [17...♖b8∓] 18.♖g1 ♗d5 19.♖×a7 g6∓ Malzahn-Felser, Bad Segeberg 2000) 13...b×c6 14.♖×c6 0-0 15.♕c2 ♕e5+ 16.♔f1 ♗b7 17.♖c3 ♖ac8 18.♘c4 ♕d4 19.♔e2 ♘e4 20.♗×e4 ♗×e4 21.♖d1 ♕×c4+ 0-1 Löhn-Klemm, Dudweiler 1996.

11...♗×d2+ 12.♘×d2 ♘e7! 13.c×b7 ♗×b7 (D)



This is a nearly lost position for White, making this variation unplayable for him.

14.♖b1

14.♕b2 0-0 15.♗e2 ♗a6 16.♗×a6 ♕×a6 17.♕b4 ♘g6 18.♕c4 ♕a5 19.♖b1 ♖fd8 20.♕b4 ♕e5+ 21.♕e4 ♕c3 22.♖d1 ♖ab8 23.♕e3 ♖d3 24.♕×a7 ♖bd8 (24...♕×d2+! 25.♖×d2 ♖b1+ 26.♖d1 ♖b×d1+ 27.♔e2 ♘f4#) 25.0-0 ♖×d2 26.♖×d2 ♕×d2 27.a4 ♕d5 0-1 Nystrom-Penttinen, Espoo 1994.

14...♗c6 15.♗e2 ♖d8 16.♖b2 ♕g5! 17.♖g1 0-0 18.♘b3 ♕e5 19.f4 ♕f6 20.g3 ♖c8 21.♖c2 ♗a4 22.♖×c8 ♖×c8 23.♕e3 ♗×b3 24.a×b3 a5 25.♔f2 ♘f5 26.♖c1 ♖×c1 27.♕×c1 ♕d4+ 28.♔f3 h5 29.♕d1 ♕c3+ 30.♔f2 ♕c5+ 31.♔f3 ♕c6+ 32.♔f2 ♕b6+ 33.♔f3 ♘d4+ 34.♔g2 ♘×e2 35.♕×e2 ♕×b3 36.♕×h5 ♕d5+ 37.♕f3 a4 0-1

Conclusion

The theoretical value of the "strength of a novelty" is important not only in our modern era; it was always essential.

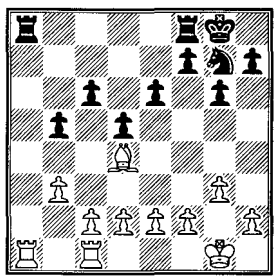
The a7 Forepost

Concept

The strategic element of the forepost is directly related to those of the open file and the outpost. From this one can deduce the actual definition of the term (which was introduced into English-language chess literature in my books series *Chess College*, Gambit 2006), i.e., an outpost on an open file, on which we can place a minor piece. But what is the use of the forepost? Why is it so important?

With the use of the forepost we achieve the blocking of a file that we are not immediately able to control. Behind the forepost we can double our rooks or maneuver them with complete freedom. At an appropriate moment the forepost can be removed, allowing our rooks to spring into action. If necessary, the file can be blocked again in the same way. The piece occupying the forepost may simultaneously be able to create threats, so that the opponent is unable to fulfill all defensive requirements of his position and allow the invasion of our rooks. In this survey we will examine a forepost deep in the opponent's camp, on a7 (h7) and even on some neighboring squares!

(225) (D)



This is the main example, describing the concept.

1.♗a7!

Unexpectedly, White conquers the a-file by temporarily blocking it on a square deep in Black's camp; Black cannot do anything about it.

1...♘f5 2.♖a6 ♖fc8 3.♖ca1 e5 4.♗c5 ♖×a6 5.♖×a6

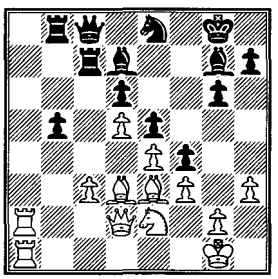
White took control of the a-file without much trouble and his chances to win are fairly increased. **1-0**

Of course, the above example is constructed, but it could easily happen in an actual game. Here is one of the

oldest and at a high level:

(226) Spassky – Karpov
Leningrad 1974
Ruy Lopez [C95]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘b8 10.d4 ♘bd7 11.♘bd2 ♗b7 12.♗c2 ♖e8 13.♘f1 ♗f8 14.♘g3 g6 15.a4 c5 16.d5 c4 17.♗g5 ♖b8 18.♕d2 ♗c8 19.a×b5 a×b5 20.♖a2 ♗g7 21.♖ea1 ♘c5 22.♕e3 ♖e7 23.♘d2 ♖c7 24.b3 c×b3 25.♘×b3 ♗d7 26.♘×c5 ♖×c5 27.♕d2 ♕c8 28.♘e2 ♘e8 29.♗d3 f5 30.♗e3 ♖c7 31.f3 f4 (D)



White already occupies the a-file (the only open one), but Black's rooks are not so badly placed, and even have some pressure along the c-file.

32.♗a7!

This appears to be the first time that this concept appeared in a game between strong players.

32...♖bb7

After 32...♖a8 33.♗f2! ♖×a2 34.♕×a2, it would be easier for White to penetrate into Black's camp.

33.♕e1!

White is targeting the b6-square, so his queen must be transferred to the g1-a7 diagonal.

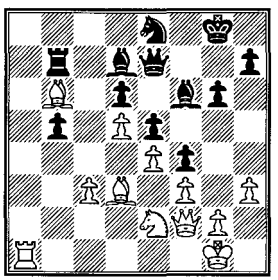
33...♕d8 34.♕f2 ♖c8 35.♖a6 ♗f6!

Precise defense; Black tries to kick the white queen away from this diagonal.

36.♗b6 ♕e7

Black could even go in for 36...♗h4!? 37.♗×d8 ♗×f2+ 38.♔×f2 ♖×d8 39.♖a7 ±.

37.♖a7 ♖cb8 38.♖×b7 ♖×b7 (D)



39.♔f1!

Keeping the queen on this important diagonal.

39...♗h4 40.♕g1 ♔g7 41.♖a7?!

There is no point in exchanging the rook that controls the only open file on the board. White could preserve a small, but lasting advantage with the natural 41.♖a8 ♘f6 42.♗a5 ±.

41...♖×a7 42.♗×a7 ♕d8 43.♕b6 ♕c7 44.♕×c7 ♘×c7

The position is now equal and very near to the draw.

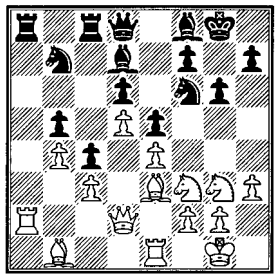
45.♗b8 ♘e8 46.♘c1 ♗d8! 47.♗a7 ♗a5 48.c4 b×c4 49.♗×c4 ♔f7 50.♘b3 ♗c7 51.♗f2 g5 52.♗e1 h5 53.♘c1 ♘f6 54.♘d3 ♔g6 55.♗a6 g4 56.h×g4 h×g4 57.♘b2 ♘h7 58.♘c4 ♘g5 59.♔f2 ♔f6 60.♗b4 ♘f7 ½-½

The next example is quite famous and well-known, as it is the demolition of a strong grandmaster:

(227) Karpov – Unzicker
Nice 1974
Ruy Lopez [C98]

1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 a6 4.♗a4 ♘f6 5.0-0 ♗e7 6.♖e1 b5 7.♗b3 d6 8.c3 0-0 9.h3 ♘a5 10.♗c2 c5 11.d4 ♕c7 12.♘bd2 ♘c6 13.d5 ♘d8 14.a4 ♖b8 15.a×b5 a×b5 16.b4

♘b7 17.♘f1 ♗d7 18.♗e3 ♖a8 19.♕d2 ♖fc8 20.♗d3g6 21.♘g3 ♗f8 22.♖a2 c4 23.♗b1 ♕d8 (D)



Karpov was probably "inspired" by the previous game...

24.♗a7!

Now every white piece has the opportunity to take up natural and strong positions. At the same time, Black's normal "blood circulation" has been disrupted, and the guilty party in this instance is the knight on b7.

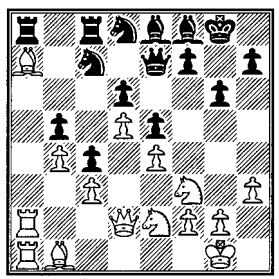
24...♘e8 25.♗c2

Here comes the rooks' doubling on the a-file.

25...♘c7 26.♖ea1 ♕e7 27.♗b1 ♗e8

The main problem of Black's cramped position is that he cannot exchange any pieces and he does not have enough space for their regrouping, so he stays in a passive position, waiting for White to show his hand.

28.♘e2 ♘d8 (D)



White's spatial advantage is great but Black's position is solid and defensible. So, White uses the rule of the two weaknesses: as he cannot win (at least directly) on the queenside, he opens a second front on the kingside. And that's the power of the spatial advantage, as pieces can be transferred from one side to another in no time.

29.♘h2! ♗g7 30.f4 f6

Bleak is 30...e×f4 31.♘×f4 ♘b7 (31...♗h6? 32.♘×g6! ±) 32.♘f3±.

31.f5! g5?!

Black should refrain from creating new weaknesses on the kingside. He should strongly consider 31...♗d7 32.♘f1± or 31...g×f5 32.e×f5 ♘f7 33.♘f1±.

32.Bc2!

The bishop will be transferred to the d1-h5 diagonal.

32...♗f7 33.♘g3 ♘b7

33...h5 looks like the only move, but in fact helps White to completely open the kingside: 34.♗d1 h4 35.♘gf1 ♗e8 36.g3 h×g3 37.♘×g3 ♗f7 38.♘f3 ♕f8 39.h4 g×h4 40.♘×h4+−.

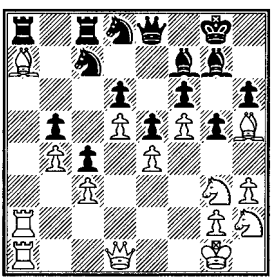
34.♗d1 h6

On principle, this move should not be made until it is forced. The weakening of g6 only accelerates Black's defense.

35.♗h5!

After the exchange of the light-square bishops the light squares will be rather weak and White will use them to invade.

35...♕e8 36.♕d1! ♘d8 (D)



37.♖a3

As Black has no useful move, White takes his time to make the first time control (move 40) and then to decide how to finish the job!

37...♔f8 38.♖1a2 ♔g8 39.♘g4! ♔f8 40.♘e3 ♔g8 41.♗×f7+ ♘×f7

If 41...♕×f7, then 42.♕h5 ♕×h5 43.♘×h5 ♔f7 44.♗b6! and the end is near...

42.♕h5 ♘d8

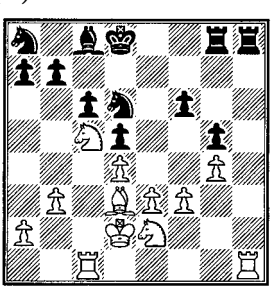
42...♘h8 keeps the white queen away from g6, but cannot save the game: 43.♘g4 ♕×h5 44.♘×h5 ♔f7 45.♗b6+−.

43.♕g6! ♔f8 44.♘h5

Black resigned as the threats ♘g4 and ♗b6 cannot be met. The threat of moving the a7-bishop has been a continual nightmare for Black! **1-0**

(228) Kasparov – Karpov
Moscow 1985
Queen's Gambit Declined [D31]

1.d4 d5 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗e7 4.c×d5 e×d5 5.♗f4 c6 6.e3 ♗f5 7.g4 ♗e6 8.h4 ♘d7 9.h5 ♘h6 10.♗e2 ♘b6 11.♖c1 ♗d6 12.♘h3 ♗×f4 13.♘×f4 ♗d7 14.♖g1 g5 15.h×g6 h×g6 16.♔d2 ♕e7 17.b3 g5 18.♘d3 0-0-0 19.♖h1 f6 20.♕g1 ♘f7 21.♕g3 ♕d6 22.♕×d6 ♘×d6 23.f3 ♖dg8 24.♘c5 ♔d8 25.♗d3 ♗c8 26.♘e2 ♘a8 (D)



White holds a small advantage, but it is not easy to propose a good plan, or is it?

27.♗h7!

A reflection of a7-square; the idea remains the same.

27...♖f8?!

Too passive. Black should opt for 27...♖g7 28.♗f5 ♖gg8 29.♘g3±.

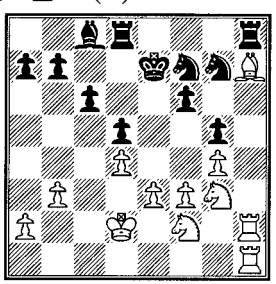
28.♖h6! ♘c7 29.♘g3 ♘f7 30.♖h2 ♘e6 31.♘d3!

Correctly preserving the knight, as Black lacks any other serious plan than exchanging some pieces.

31...♘g7 32.♖ch1 ♔e7 33.♘f2

The premature 33.♗g6?! ♖×h2+ 34.♖×h2 ♖h8 gives White nothing.

33...♖d8 (D)



34.♗f5?!

There is no point to this. As in the previous game, White should open a second front: 34.♔c3! ♗e6 35.e4 ♘d6 36.a4±.

34...♖×h2 35.♖×h2 ♘×f5 36.g×f5 ♖h8! 37.♖×h8 ♘×h8

Now White lost most of his advantage and the game steered for the safe waters of a draw.

38.e4 ♘f7 39.♘g4 ♘d6! 40.♘e3 d×e4 41.f×e4 b6 42.b4?!

White's last inaccuracy. He should opt for 42.e5 ♘f7 (42...♘e8?! 43.♘e4±) 43.♘g4 f×e5 44.d×e5 c5 45.♔d3±.

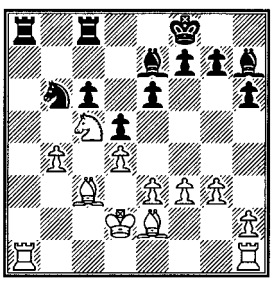
42...♗a6! 43.♘g4 ♘b5 44.♔d3 ♘a3+

White has nothing better than 45.♔d2 ♘b5 46.♔d3 ♘a3+. ½-½

Neighboring squares around a7 could be used as well to reach the goal:

(229) Tu Hoang – Komliakov
Moscow 1994
Slav Defense [D11]

1.d4 d5 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.c4 c6 4.g3 ♗f5 5.♘c3 e6 6.♕b3 ♕b6 7.c5 ♕×b3 8.a×b3 ♘e4 9.♘h4 ♘×c3 10.b×c3 ♗c2 11.b4 h6 12.f3 ♗e7 13.♘g2 ♗h7 14.e3 0-0 15.♔d2 ♖c8 16.♘e1 ♗d8 17.♘d3 ♘d7 18.♗b2 a5 19.♗e2 a×b4 20.c×b4 ♔f8 21.♗c3 b5 22.c×b6 ♘×b6 23.♘c5 ♗e7 (D)



It seems that Black should be more or less fine, but the truth is that White stands better.

24.♗a6!

Not exactly the a7-square but a very near one to it; the idea remains the same.

24...♖c7 25.♖a5 ♖ca7 26.♖ha1

Both sides have done their duty and doubled their rooks on the a-file. White keeps the advantage, as any time he moves his a6-bishop, Black would be obliged to hand White a passed pawn after ...♖×a5 when White will reply b×a5.

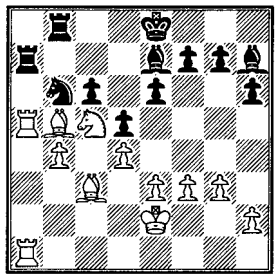
26...♔e8?

A blunder. Black had to try 26...♗d8 27.♔e2 ♘c4 28.♗b7! ♘×a5 29.♗×a8 ♖×a8 30.b×a5 ♔e8 31.e4±.

27.♔e2?

27.♗b5! would win: 27...♖×a5 28.♗×c6+ ♔d8 29.b×a5+−.

27...♖b8 28.♗b5! (D)



28...♖×a5?

Black blunders again. More stubborn was 28...♖c7 29.♘a6 ♖cc8 30.♗d3 (30.♘×b8? c×b5∓) 30...♗×d3+ 31.♔×d3 ♖b7 32.♘c5±.

29.♗×c6+ ♔d8 30.♖×a5

30.b×a5 was good as well.

30...♘c8 31.b5

White wins.

31...♗d6?! 32.♘d7! 1-0

Conclusion

In general, the combination of an open file, a forepost and an outpost is a significant strategic advantage in itself and may easily suffice for victory. A forepost deep in the opponent's camp can especially create many more difficulties for him, as he may not haveat his disposal enough space to maneuver.

David Bronstein (1924-2006)
Genius of Attack

Concept

He came within one draw of becoming world champion, and was one of the strongest players in history to not win the title. David Ionovich Bronstein was a remarkable creative genius and a

master of scintillating tactics that enthralled the chess world for many decades. He belonged to this rare category of great chess players who never became world champions, although they fully deserved it.

David Ionovich Bronstein was born on February 19th, 1924 in Bila Tserkva (near Kiev), Ukraine and died on December 5th, 2006 in Minsk, Belarus. He won international fame as a chess player at the 1948 Interzonal and the Candidates Tournament in Budapest in 1950, where he defeated Boleslavsky to become the challenger for the world title. He also married Boleslavsky's daughter Tatiana.

Bronstein came agonizingly close to actually taking the crown from Mikhail Botvinnik in Moscow's Chaikovsky Concert Hall, when he was leading by a full point after 22 games (of 24). He lost game 23 and then drew game 24, the drawn match resulting in Botvinnik retaining his title.

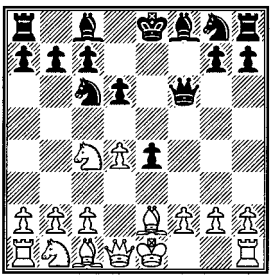
David Bronstein was also a great chess writer, and his book on the 1953 Candidates Tournament, *Zurich International Chess Tournament 1953*, was acclaimed worldwide, as was a later effort, *The Sorcerer's Apprentice*. Chess fans especially appreciated his habit of explaining the ideas behind moves, instead of using the traditional method, which he called "analysis of moves that never made it to the scoresheet." Bronstein was also a pioneer in popularizing the King's Indian Defense, which had been considered dubious until he showed how to play it in his games and in a famous book on the King's Indian.

As a tribute to his memory, here are five examples of his art – masterpieces of both attack and defense...

(230) Bronstein – Mikenas
Rostov-on-Don 1941
Latvian Gambit [C40]
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 f5?!

The dubious Latvian Gambit. Such early pawn advances cannot be recommended in modern chess. We will soon understand the reason!

3.♘×e5 ♕f6 4.d4 d6 5.♘c4 f×e4 6.♗e2 ♘c6!? (D)



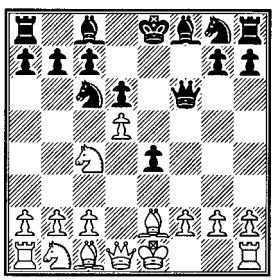
This is an interesting try, as the alternatives failed to satisfy:

(a) 6...♕d8 7.♘c3 (7.d5 ♘f6 8.♘c3 ♗e7 9.♗e3± Kosten-Hector, Val Maubuee 1988; 7.0-0 ♘f6 8.f3 e×f3 9.♗×f3 ♗e7 10.♘c3 0-0 11.♗g5 ♘bd7 12.♘d5 ♘×d5 13.♗×d5+ ♔h8 14.♗×e7 ♕×e7 15.♖×f8+ ♕×f8 16.♕f3 ♕×f3 17.♗×f3 ♘f6 18.♖e1 ♔g8∓ Fransson-Hector, Gausdal 1990) 7...d5 8.♘e5 ♘f6 9.♗g5± Ivanovic-Hector, Metz 1988.

(b) 6...d5 7.♘e3 ♗e6 (7...♕f7 8.c4 c6 9.♘c3 ♘f6 10.♕a4 ♘bd7 11.c×d5 ♘b6 12.♕b3 ♘b×d5 13.♘e×d5 ♘×d5 [13...c×d5 14.f3 e×f3 15.♗×f3 ♗e6 16.♗f4±] 14.♘×e4± Enklaar-Hoelzl, Amsterdam 1979) 8.c4 (8.0-0 ♕d8 9.c4 d×c4 10.d5 ♗f7 11.♘c3 ♘f6 12.♕c2± Nielsen-Adahl, Stockholm 1993) 8...♗b4+ 9.♗d2 ♗×d2+ 10.♕×d2 ♘e7 11.♘c3 c6 12.0-0 0-0 13.f3! e×f3 14.♖×f3± ♕g5? 15.♘e×d5 ♕h4 16.g3 1-0 Kozhuharov-Vasilev, Sunny Beach 2005.

(c) 6...♕f7 7.♘c3 ♗f5 (7...♘f6 8.♗g5 ♘bd7 9.♘b5 ♔d8 10.♕d2 ♗e7 11.0-0-0± Littlewood-Kindermann, London 1978) 8.0-0 ♘f6 9.f3! e×f3 10.♖×f3 ♗g6 11.♗g5 ♗e7 12.♘e3 c6 13.♗c4 d5 14.♘c×d5!+− c×d5 15.♘×d5 ♕×d5 16.♗×d5 ♘×d5 17.♗×e7 ♘×e7 18.♕e1 ♔d8 19.♕h4! ♘d7 20.♖e1 ♖e8 21.d5 ♘f6 22.♖×f6 g×f6 23.♕×f6 1-0 Relange-Bauer, Cappelle la Grande 1994.

7.d5! (D)



Best, as 7.c3 looks too naive: 7...d5 (7...♗e7 8.0-0 ♕f7 9.d5± Konsek-Wirth, Germany 1999; 7...♕f7 8.0-0 ♘f6 9.f3 e×f3 10.♖×f3± Tietzen-Hirsch, Passau 2000; 7...♗d7?! 8.0-0 ♕d8 9.f3 e×f3 10.♗×f3 ♘f6 11.♖e1+ ♗e7 12.♕e2± Schabanel-Broca, France 2004) 8.♘e3 ♗e6 (8...♗d6? 9.♘×d5 ♕f7 10.c4 ♗e6 11.♘bc3 ♗×d5 12.c×d5 ♘b4 13.♘×e4± Elis-Schoerghuber, Bonn 1998) 9.0-0 0-0-0 (9...♗d6 10.f3 [10.♗g4 h5 11.♗×e6 ♕×e6 12.c4 d×c4 13.d5 ♕e5 14.g3 ♘d4∞ Ulyanovsky-Cruz, Lisbon 2003] 10...e×f3 [10...♕h4? 11.g3 ♗×g3 12.h×g3 ♕×g3+ 13.♘g2 ♗h3 14.♖f2 ♘f6 15.♗f4± Scherer-Pape, Germany 1994] 11.♗×f3 ♕h6 12.g3 0-0-0 13.♘f5 ♕f6 14.♘×d6+ ♖×d6 15.♗×d5± Goldgewicht-Senechaud, Parthenay 1992) 10.f3 ♕h4 11.f×e4 d×e4 12.♗g4 ♗×g4 13.♕×g4+ ♕×g4 14.♘×g4 ♗d6 15.♗g5 ♖e8 16.♘d2± Bademian Orchanian-Burgos, Mar del Plata 1993.

7...♘e5

The alternative 7...♘d4 is also not able to solve Black's problems: 8.♘c3 (8.0-0 ♗f5 9.f3 [9.♗e3 ♘×e2+ 10.♕×e2± Pinos Rubio-Perez Vecino, Valencia 2004] 9...e×f3 10.♗×f3 ♘×c2 [10...♘×f3+? 11.♕×f3± Huyck-Dutreeuw, Gent 1994] 11.♘e3 ♘×e3 12.♗×e3∞/=; 8.c3 ♘×e2 9.♕×e2 ♕g6 10.♘e3 ♘f6 11.0-0 ♗e7∞ Rouc-Smid, Plzen 2004) 8...♗f5 9.♘e3 (9.♗e3 ♘×e2 10.♕×e2 0-0-0 11.♗×a7 ♘h6 12.h3 ♗e7 13.♘a5± Groenegress-Soelter, Horn 1979; 9.♗h5+ g6 10.♗e3 ♗g7 11.♗e2 [11.♗×d4 ♕×d4 12.♕×d4 ♗×d4 13.♘b5 ♗g7∞ Artal Alegria-Loscos Vilafranca, Aragon 2003] 11...♘×e2 [11...♘e7? 12.♗×d4 ♕×d4 13.♕×d4 ♗×d4 14.♘b5± Levine-Lynn, Dunedin 1983] 12.♕×e2 ♕e7±) 9...♘×e2 10.♕×e2 0-0-0 (10...♗g6 11.♕b5+ ♔f7 12.♕×b7± Magnier-Osman, France 1998) 11.♘×e4 (11.♕c4 a6 [11...♗d7!? 12.♘×e4 ♕g6 13.♗d2 ♖e8 14.♘g3 h5 15.0-0-0± Real de Azua-Orione, Moron 2003] 12.b4 ♗d7 13.♗b2 ♖e8 14.a4 ♔b8 15.♖b1 [with attack] 15...♕e7 16.b5 a5 17.b6 c×b6 18.♕d4 ♔a7 19.♗a3 ♕d8 20.♘c4 1-0 Lane-Wojnar, Queenstown 2006) 11...♗×e4 12.♕g4+ ♔b8 13.♕×e4±.

8.0-0

This looks much better than 8.♘e3 ♕e7 9.♘c3 ♘f6± Dubisch-Phipps, Seattle 1982 or 8.♘×e5 ♕×e5 9.♘c3 ♘f6 10.♗b5+ ♔f7 (10...♔d8?! 11.♗e3 a6 12.♗e2 ♗e7 13.0-0 ♗f5 14.♗d4± Zieher-Urban, Germany 1989) 11.0-0 ♗g4 12.♗e2 ♗×e2 13.♕×e2 ♖e8±.

8...♘×c4 9.♗×c4 ♕g6 10.♗b5+ ♔d8

The other option is 10...♗d7 11.♗×d7+ ♔×d7 12.♘c3 ♘f6 13.♕d4 (13.♖e1 ♖e8 14.♕d4± Borisek-Picco, Nova Gorica 2000) 13...c5 14.d×c6+

b×c6 15.f3±.

11.♗f4 h5?!

Black is looking for trouble. He should go for the natural 11...♘f6 – and pray.

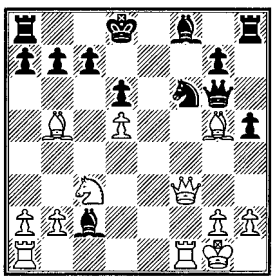
12.f3!

Opening the center and clearing the way to the black king. This should be the main approach for every serious chessplayer when the opponent king has remained in the center.

12...♗f5 13.♘c3 e×f3

I would prefer 13...♘f6 14.♕d4 a6 15.♗e2±.

14.♕×f3 ♗×c2 15.♗g5+! ♘f6(D)



15...♕×g5 16.♕×f8#

16.♖ae1!

All White's forces join the battle. Not so clear was 16.♕e2 ♕×g5 17.♖×f6 ♕e5 or 16.♕h3 ♕×g5 17.♖×f6 c6 18.d×c6 b×c6.

16...c6

Alternatives also lose: 16...♕×g5 17.♕×f6+! ♗e7 18.♕f8+! ♖×f8 19.♖×f8+ ♗×f8 20.♖e8#; 16...♗e7 17.♕e2.

17.♗×f6+!

17.d×c6? ♕×g5 18.c×b7 ♖b8∞

17...♕×f6 18.♕e2 ♕d4+ 19.♔h1 ♗g6

19...c×b5 20.♕e8+ ♔c7 21.♖f7+ ♗e7 22.♖e×e7+ ♔b6 23.♕×b5#

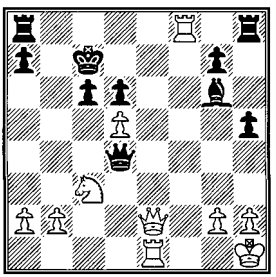
20.♖×f8+!

The series of hammer-blows begins!

20...♔c7

20...♖×f8 21.♕e7+ ♔c8 22.d×c6 and mate follows soon.

21.♗×c6! b×c6 (D)



22.♘b5+! c×b5 23.♕×b5 ♖e8

23...♖a×f8 24.♖e7+ ♔c8 25.♕d7+ ♔b8 26.♕b7#

24.♖e7+! 1-0

Black resigned as he is unable to avoid getting mated. In this game White was able to sacrifice most of his pieces!

(231) Veresov – Bronstein

Moscow 1960

Bogo-Indian Defense [E11]

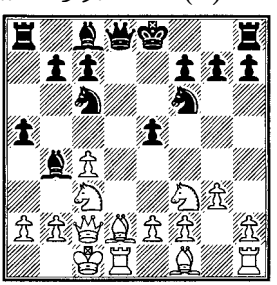
1.d4 e6 2.c4 ♗b4+ 3.♗d2 a5 4.♘f3 ♘f6 5.♘c3 d6 6.♕c2 ♘c6 7.g3?!

The main line today goes 7.a3 ♗×c3 8.♗×c3 d5 (8...♕e7 9.e4 e5 10.d5 ♘b8 11.♗e2 ♗g4 12.0-0± Tkachiev-Delchev, France 2001) 9.e3 0-0 10.b3 ♗d7 11.♗b2± Khenkin-Winants, Brussels 1998.

7...e5 8.d×e5?!

More natural seems to be 8.d5 ♘e7 9.e4=.

8...d×e5 9.0-0-0 (D)



9...♗×c3

Also good is 9...♕e7 10.♘d5 ♘×d5 11.c×d5 ♗×d2+ 12.♖×d2 ♘b4 13.♕c4 e4.

10.♗×c3 ♕e7 11.♗g2 ♘b4!?

11...0-0 is also fine for Black.

12.♕a4+

After 12.♗×b4 a×b4 13.♔b1 0-0, Black's attack will carry the day.

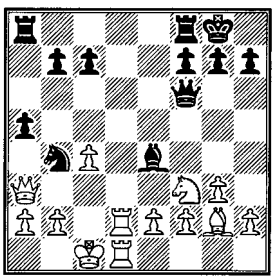
12...♗d7 13.♕a3

13.♕b3 ♘e4 14.♗×e5 ♘×f2 looks good for Black.

13...♗c6! 14.♗×e5

White is obliged to accept his opponent's pawn sacrifice as after 14.♖hg1 0-0 15.♘d2 (15.♘×e5?! ♗×g2 16.♖×g2 ♘e4 17.♔b1 f6 18.♘d3 ♘×c3+ 19.♕×c3 ♕×e2∓) 15...♗×g2 16.♖×g2 ♖fd8∓ he will suffer.

14...0-0 15.♗×f6 ♕×f6 16.♖d2 ♗e4! 17.♖hd1 (D)



How should Black continue his attack?

17...h6!

A fantastic idea. Black intends to form a lethal battery along the b1–h7 diagonal (...♗h7 and ...♕g6/f5). Most players would have focused just on the queenside, playing something like 17...b5 18.♖d4 ♘c2 19.♕×f8+! ♖×f8 20.♖×e4 ♘b4 21.a3 ♘c6 22.c×b5 ♕f5 23.♖c4 ♕×b5 24.♖c2∞/=, but that's the difference between a great master and a simple master!

18.♗h3?

White has lost his way. He should opt for 18.♕b3! ♗h7 19.♘d4 c5 20.♘b5 a4 21.♕a3 ♕×f2 22.e4 ♕f6 23.♕e3 a3!∞.

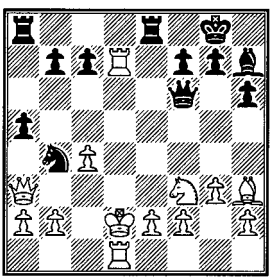
18...♗h7 19.♖d7?!

White's last chance could be found in 19.♘d4 c5 20.♘b5 ♕×f2 21.e4 ♕f6 22.♘d6 ♖a6 although I still prefer Black.

19...♖fe8!

Not clear is 19...♕g6 20.♔d2! (20.♘d4?! ♕h5 21.♗g2 c5 22.♘f3 ♖fe8∓).

20.♔d2 (D)



Or 20.♗f1 ♕g6 21.♖7d3 ♘×d3+ 22.♖×d3 ♕f6∓.

20...♗f5!!

The most logical but also the most difficult move of the game. Black forgets about the potential threats of his previous plan and just plays the best continuation, confirming his "independent" mindset.

21.♕c3

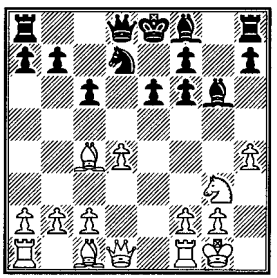
There was no chance anymore: 21.♗×f5 ♕×f5 22.♖d3 ♘×d3 23.♕×d3 ♖ad8 24.♘d4 ♕×d3+ 25.♔×d3 ♖×d4+ 26.♔×d4 ♖d8+.

21...♗×h3 22.♕×f6 g×f6 0-1

A "fresh mind" never loses its habits, even after many years... Here is more proof – and another short masterpiece:

(232) Aseev – Bronstein
Moscow 1982
Caro-Kann Defense [B16]

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 d×e4 4.♘×e4 ♘f6 5.♘×f6+ g×f6 6.♗c4 ♗f5 7.♘e2 ♘d7 8.♘g3 ♗g6 9.0-0 e6 10.h4?! (D)



If White wishes to play this pawn advance, he should do it before castling.

10...f5!

An excellent response. White would probably be happy with the natural 10...h5 11.♖e1 ♗e7 (11...f5? 12.♗g5 ♗e7 13.♗×e6!±) 12.♗d3 ♗×d3 13.♕×d3 ♕c7 (13...f5 14.♗g5 ♗×g5 15.h×g5 ♕×g5 [15...♔f8 16.g6] 16.♘×f5±) 14.♕f3 0-0-0=.

11.h5

After 11.♗g5 ♗e7 12.♗×e7 ♕×e7 13.h5 ♕h4 14.♕f3 f4 15.♘e2 ♗×c2 16.♕×f4 ♕×f4 17.♘×f4 0-0-0∓, Black should be happy.

11...♕h4 12.♕f3?!

Bad is 12.h×g6? h×g6 13.♖e1 f4 14.♗×f4 ♕×f4∓ but maybe White should try 12.♖e1 f4 13.♘e4 ♗×h5 14.♕d2 ♖g8 15.♕×f4 ♖g4 16.♕h2 ♖×e4 17.♖×e4 ♕×e4 18.♕×h5 ♘b6 19.♗d3 ♕×d4 20.♕×h7 ♕f6∓.

12...♗d6 13.h×g6

Or 13.♖e1 ♗×g3 (13...♘f6 14.h×g6 h×g6 15.♔f1) 14.♕×g3 ♕×g3 15.f×g3 ♗×h5∓.

13...h×g6 14.♖e1?

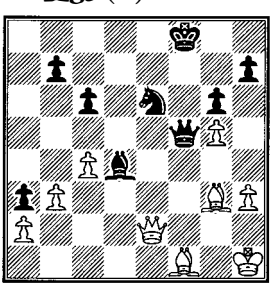
Hard to accept it but White should have continued the fight by playing 14.♖d1 f4 15.♗×f4 ♗×f4∓.

14...♗×g3 0-1

White resigned because of 15.f×g3 ♕×d4+ and 16...♕×c4.

(233) Reshevsky – Bronstein
Zurich 1953
King's Indian Defense [E69]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 g6 3.g3 ♗g7 4.♗g2 0-0 5.♘c3 d6 6.♘f3 ♘bd7 7.0-0 e5 8.e4 ♖e8 9.h3 e×d4 10.♘×d4 ♘c5 11.♖e1 a5 12.♕c2 c6 13.♗e3 ♘fd7 14.♖ad1 a4 15.♘de2 ♕a5 16.♗f1 ♘e5 17.♘d4 a3 18.f4 ♘ed7 19.b3 ♘a6 20.♗f2 ♘dc5 21.♖e3 ♘b4 22.♕e2 ♗d7 23.e5 d×e5 24.f×e5 ♖ad8 25.g4 ♘e6 26.♗h4 ♘×d4 27.♖×d4 ♕c5 28.♖de4 ♗h6 29.♔h1 ♗e6 30.g5 ♗g7 31.♖f4 ♗f5 32.♘e4 ♗×e4+ 33.♖f×e4 ♘a6 34.e6 f×e6 35.♖×e6 ♖f8 36.♖e7 ♗d4 37.♖3e6 ♕f5 38.♖e8 ♘c5 39.♖×d8 ♘×e6 40.♖×f8+ ♔×f8 41.♗g3 (D)



White tried to save his game by transposing to an opposite-color bishops endgame, even a pawn down.

41...♕×g5!

And Black accepted the challenge, as 41...♘×g5? 42.♗d6+ ♔g7 43.♕e7± was not an option.

42.♕×e6 ♕×g3

Black's advantage is quite serious and this is not just because of his extra pawn, but more as a result of the excellent cooperation between his queen and bishop. This cooperating tandem cre-

ates mating threats and also keeps an eye on the weak white a2-pawn.

43.♕c8+

A useful check, as the black king must come out of its shelter and in some lines White can exchange queens by exploiting its position.

43...♔e7 44.♕g4

It appears that the b7-pawn is poisoned: 44.♕×b7+? ♔d8 45.♕a8+ ♔c7 46.♕a5+ ♗b6 47.♕d2 ♕g1#.

44...♕c3 45.♔g2 ♕b2+ 46.♕e2+ ♔d6! 47.♔f3

Now the queen exchange is unpleasant for White: 47.♕×b2 a×b2 48.♗d3 ♔e5 49.♔f3 ♗c5 50.♗b1 ♔f6 51.♔e4 h5 52.♗c2 g5 53.♗b1 ♗d6 54.♗c2 g4 55.h×g4 h×g4 56.♗b1 g3 57.♔f3 ♗f4−+ and the black king goes to c1.

47...♗c5 48.♔e4 ♕d4+ 49.♔f3 ♕f6+ 50.♔g2 ♔c7!

The black king will find shelter on the queenside, allowing his forces to execute their plans without interference.

51.♕f3 ♕b2+ 52.♕e2 ♕d4 53.♔f3 h5!

Of course! The last reserves enter the fray! Black needs his kingside pawns to assist his attack.

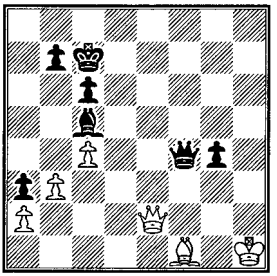
54.♔g2 g5

Black missed a shorter win with 54...h4! 55.♕e1 ♕g1+ 56.♔f3 ♕h1+ 57.♔g4 ♕h2 58.♔g5 ♕×a2−+.

55.♔g3 ♕f4+ 56.♔g2 g4 57.h×g4 h×g4 58.♔h1 ♔b6

58...g3? 59.♗h3 ♕c1+ 60.♗f1 (60.♕f1 ♕b2) 60...♔b6 61.♔g2 is not clear. Black's winning method is based on *zugzwang*.

59.♔g2 ♔c7 60.♔h1 (D)



60...♗d6! 61.♔g1 ♔b6 62.♕g2

White is in *zugzwang*: 62.♔h1 ♕h6+ 63.♔g1 ♗c5+ 64.♔g2 ♕h3#.

62...♗c5+ 63.♔h1 ♕h6+ 64.♕h2 ♕e3!

Again White is in *zugzwang*.

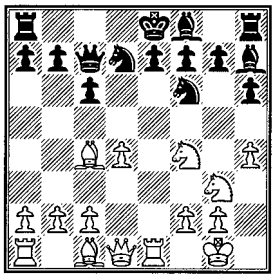
65.b4 ♗d4 0-1

Of course 65...♗×b4 was also winning. White resigned as he is mated after 66.c5+ ♔a7 67.♕g2 g3! 68.♗e2 (68.♕c2 ♕g1#) 68...♕h6+. It must be mentioned that this is quite a famous game, first analyzed by the great world championship candidate, grandmaster David Bronstein.

A chessplayer should also try to understand the "worst-piece principle." In situations involving strategic maneuvers (when a time factor is not of decisive importance), a chessplayer should look for the piece which stands worse than the others. Making this piece more active will often turn out to be the surest way to improve the position as a whole. Using the worst-piece principle makes it easier to search for the strongest continuation.

(234) Porreca – Bronstein
Belgrade 1954
Caro-Kann Defense [B18]

1.e4 c6 2.d4 d5 3.♘c3 d×e4 4.♘×e4 ♗f5 5.♘g3 ♗g6 6.h4 h6 7.♘h3 ♗h7 8.♗c4 ♘f6 9.♘f4 ♘bd7 10.0-0 ♕c7 11.♖e1 (D)



Black probably mishandled the opening and now he faces grave problems. He is looking for a way to complete his development but this does not seem to be an easy task.

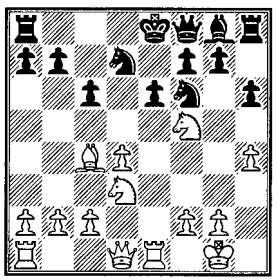
11...♗g8!

Temporarily retreating and strengthening the valuable e6-square, as the immediate 11...e6? fails to 12.♗×e6 f×e6 13.♘×e6 +−.

12.♘d3

A double-edged position would arise after the natural 12.a4 0-0-0 13.c3 e6, so White tries to regroup his pieces.

12...e6 13.♗f4 ♗d6 14.♗×d6 ♕×d6 15.♘f5 ♕f8 (D)



Black's position, with all those pieces on the edge of the board, does not look rosy, but as there is nothing concrete for White, it can only be improved!

16.♕f3?!

White loses his way. He should have tried 16.♘f4!? ♔d8! (16...0-0-0? 17.♗×e6 f×e6 18.♘g6 ♕b4 19.c3 +−) 17.♘e3 ♗h7 18.a4 ♔c7 ±.

16...0-0-0 17.♘g3 ♗h7

Back to life!

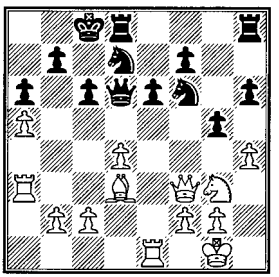
18.a4

18.c3 g5∞ was the natural continuation.

18...♗×d3?

Both opponents missed that 18...♘b6 wins a pawn!

19.♗×d3 ♕d6 20.a5 a6 21.♖a3 g5 (D)



Black has succeeded in completing his development, he regrouped his passively placed pieces and now he has entered a double-edged middlegame.

22.h5 ♕f4

22...♕×d4 23.♗×a6 ♔c7 24.♗f1∞

23.♕e2 ♔c7

Black avoided giving White attacking chances with 23...♕×d4 24.♗×a6 b×a6 25.♕×a6+ ♔c7 26.♖c3∞/=.

24.c3 ♖he8 25.♘e4 ♘×e4 26.♕×e4?

As the ending is favorable for Black (weak pawns on a5 and h5) White should have preserved the queens: 26.♗×e4 ♘f6 27.g3 ♕d6 (27...♕×e4 28.♕×e4 ♘×e4 29.♖×e4=) 28.♗f3=.

26...♕×e4 27.♗×e4 ♘f6 28.♗f3 g4! 29.♗d1 ♖g8

29...♖d5!∓ was even stronger.

30.♖e5 ♖d5! 31.♖a4 ♖g5

Black wins material and the game.

32.♗b3 ♖d×e5 33.d×e5 ♘d7! 34.♗d1 ♘×e5 35.♖e4 ♖×h5 36.♗×g4 ♘×g4 37.♖×g4 ♖×a5 38.♖g7 ♖f5 39.g4 ♖f6 40.♔g2 ♔d6 41.♔g3 e5 42.♖g8 ♔d5 0-1

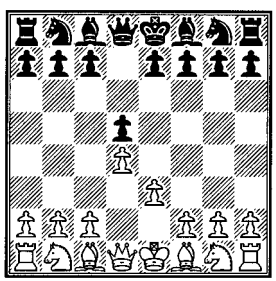
Conclusion

David Bronstein did not made it to the world champion's highest title, but he won a place in our hearts for his independent and fresh ideas. Such players never are forgotten, as they still live through their masterpieces they left behind. I have always thought that physical death is just a part of life; the most important thing is that one's ideas will stay alive and kicking and in this way a human never actually in fact dies. David Bronstein was of the few immortals who made it both to heaven and to our hearts and memories...

Facing a Good Friend

During the 4th Kallithea Open at Khalkidiki (Greece) which was held in the early days of May 2007, I had to face my best friend over the board. At that time, after the fifth round, we shared second place, a half-point behind the tournament leader. Obviously, a win would allow me to have a serious run at winning the tournament, but on the other hand, facing your best friend is not something that is always pleasant. Generally, in life you have to do things that you do not have a good feeling about, but who told you that life is fair?

(235) Vragoteris – Grivas
Kallithea 2007
Queen's Pawn Game [D04]
1.d4 d5 2.e3 (D)



A flexible move revealing White's intentions: I do not wish to enter a theoretical battle; I just want to develop my pieces. This is all quite understandable; my friend is not playing too much OTB chess nowadays, but he remains a strong tactician with an acceptable positional feel. All in all, I consider him underrated. 2.♘f3 ♘f6 3.e3 ♗f5 4.♗d3 ♗×d3 5.♕×d3 c6 6.♘bd2 g6 7.0-0 ♗g7 8.c3 0-0 9.e4 ♘×e4 10.♘×e4 d×e4 11.♕×e4 e6 12.♖e1 ♕d5 13.♗f4 ♘d7 14.♕×d5 ½-½ Hosek-Lamper, Ostrava 2003 is a somewhat similar line.

2...c6 3.♗d3 ♘f6 4.♘d2

Usually White opts for the immediate 4.♘f3 ♗g4 5.♘bd2 (5.c4 e6 6.♕b3 ♕b6 7.♘e5 ♗h5 8.c5 ♕c7 9.0-0= Svidler-Greenfeld, Tilburg 1994) 5...e6 (5...♘bd7 6.h3 ♗h5 7.c4 e6 8.0-0 ♗g6 9.♗×g6 h×g6 10.♕c2 ♗e7 11.b3 0-0 12.♗b2 a5 13.a3 ♕c7 14.e4 ½-½ Mitkov-Akobian, Alajuela 2006) 6.c4 ♗d6 7.♕b3 b6 8.♕c2 ♘bd7 9.h3 ♗×f3 10.♘×f3 0-0 11.0-0 ♖c8 12.b3 c5 13.♗b2 b5 14.♕e2 b×c4 15.b×c4 c×d4 16.c×d5 ♘×d5 17.♘×d4 ♘c5 18.♗c4± Khalifman-Comp Hydra Bilbao 2005.

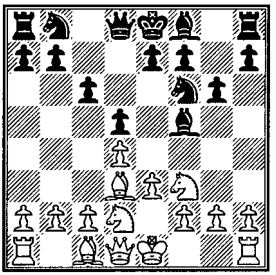
4...g6

Also not bad is 4...♗g4 5.♘e2 (5.f3?! ♗h5 6.b3 ♘bd7 7.♗b2 ♕c7 8.g4 ♗g6 9.f4 e6 10.♗×g6 h×g6 11.♕f3 ♗d6∓ Lasio-Malakhov, Lunigiana 1998) 5...♘bd7 6.f3 ♗h5 7.♘f4 ♗g6 8.♘×g6 h×g6 9.f4 e6 10.c3 ♗d6 11.0-0 ♕e7∞ Norowitz-Stripunsky, New York 2003.

5.♘gf3

5.f4?! ♗f5 6.♘gf3 e6 7.0-0 ♘bd7 8.♘e5 h5 9.♕e2 ♗g7 10.b3 0-0 is fine for Black, as in Abdulla-Mohammad, Dhaka 2007.

5...♗f5!? (D)



Black fights for the "better" bishop advantage (dark-square bishops) by exchanging the other pair, the light-square bishops. Possible also is 5...♗g7 6.0-0 0-0 7.c3 ♗f5 8.♕c2 ♗×d3 9.♕×d3 ♘bd7= Abouchaaya-Rogers, Sydney 1994, but after all, if you do not try hard to beat your friend, then whom will you try to beat?

6.♕e2!?

An interesting, flexible idea. White is just aiming to exchange some pieces, mainly by achieving the e4-advance. Alternatives are:

(a) 6.0-0 ♗g7 7.♘e5 ♘bd7 8.♗×f5 g×f5 9.♘df3 0-0 10.c3 ♘e4 11.♘d3 ♔h8 12.♕b3 ♖b8 13.c4 e6 14.♗d2 ♖g8∞ Forbrich-Stenner, Germany 1991.

(b) 6.♘e5 ♗×d3 (6...♘bd7 7.f4 ♗×d3 8.c×d3 ♗g7 9.b3 0-0 10.0-0 ♘e8 11.♗b2 ♘d6 12.♔h1 ♖e8 13.♕f3 f6 14.♘×d7 ♕×d7 15.e4 d×e4 16.d×e4 f5 17.e5 ♘b5 18.♕d3 ♖ed8 ½-½ Mair-Wallis, Austria 2002) 7.c×d3 ♘bd7 8.0-0 ♕c7 9.f4 e6 10.♘df3 ♗e7 11.b3 ♘×e5 12.♘×e5 ♘d7 13.♗b2 ♘×e5 14.d×e5 a5 15.♔h1 ♕b6 16.♖f3 a4 17.g4 a×b3 18.a×b3 ♖×a1 19.♗×a1 ♕b4∞ Baraba-Schell, Leimen 2001.

(c) 6.♗×f5 g×f5 7.♘b3 ♘bd7 8.♗d2 ♖g8 9.g3 e6 10.♘e5 ♗d6 11.♘×d7 ♘×d7 12.♕e2 ♕f6 13.c4 d×c4 14.♕×c4 ♘b6 15.♕c2 0-0-0= Specht-Petri, Naumburg 2003.

(d) 6.♗e2 ♗g7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♘h4 ♗c8 9.c3 ♘e4 10.♘hf3 f5 11.♘e1 ♘d7 12.f4 ♘df6 13.♘d3 ♘×d2 14.♗×d2 ♘e4 15.♗e1 b6 16.♘e5 ♗b7= Hawkins-Rutter, Birmingham 2006.

6...♗×d3

The alternative is 6...♗g7 7.c3 ♘bd7 8.e4 d×e4 9.♘×e4 ♘×e4 10.♗×e4 ♗×e4 11.♕×e4 ♘f6 12.♕h4 ½-½ Kukofka-Raupp, Germany 2000. In this position it is difficult for Black to dream about something more than a draw, especially after 12...0-0 13.♗h6.

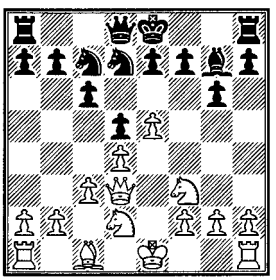
7.♕×d3 ♘a6!?

Black has decided to delay castling and avoid a pawn exchange on e4 (after White's potential e4-advance). So, it is important to keep an eye on the e6-square and the maneuver starting with the text move (...♘a6-c7) is now quite understandable.

8.c3 ♗g7 9.e4 ♘c7

Of course 9...d×e4 10.♘×e4 ♘×e4 11.♕×e4 ♕d5 12.♕e2 ♘c7 13.♗f4 ♘e6 14.♗e5 is too drawish and Black felt that he should avoid it.

10.e5 ♘d7 (D)



11.h4!

The right follow-up. White should avoid something like 11.0-0 0-0 12.♖e1 c5 when Black has achieved a kind of French Defense pawn structure in which the absence of the light-square bishops is essential.

11...♘e6 12.♘f1?!

12.h5!? ♘f4 13.♕f1 ♘×h5 14.♘b3

f5 is just playing into Black's hands, but better was 12.♘g5 ♘df8 13.♘df3 h5 14.♗e3 ♕b6 15.0-0-0±.

12...h5

12...c5!? 13.♘g5 ♕b6 14.♘×e6 ♕×e6 15.h5 0-0-0 is about equal and it was a serious alternative for Black to consider. The problem with the text move is that it makes the possibility of a future ...f6 more difficult in view of the weakness on g6.

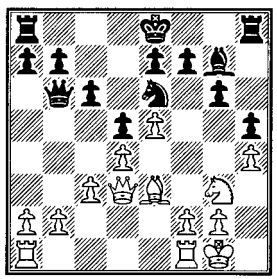
13.♘g5 ♘df8 14.♘g3 ♕b6

14...♘×g5 15.♗×g5 f6 16.e×f6 e×f6 17.♗f4 ♕e7+ 18.♘e2 0-0-0 19.0-0-0 is about equal again, but as has already been mentioned, Black is avoiding all "easy" looking positions, contrary to his "playing style." This kind of lack of objectivity cannot be considered serious and should find no followers.

15.0-0 ♘×g5 16.♗×g5 ♘e6

Of course 16...♕×b2? 17.♖fb1 ♕a3 18.♖×b7 is murderous.

17.♗e3 (D)



Now White is set for the f4-f5 advance.

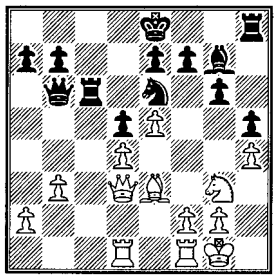
17...♘c7! 18.♗g5

18.f4?! e6 19.b3 ♗f8 20.♘e2 (20.c4 ♗e7) 20...c5 is what Black was wishing for. 18.b3 is also interesting and must be preferable in my opinion, but White is aiming to repeat the position, with a "friendly" draw.

18...c5!?

The answer was no! After all, the game of chess is made for brave hearts, right?

19.♖ad1 ♖c8 20.b3 c×d4 21.c×d4 ♘e6 22.♗e3 ♖c6! (D)



Black prepares ...0-0 and ...♖fc8, invading via the c-file. White has to act.

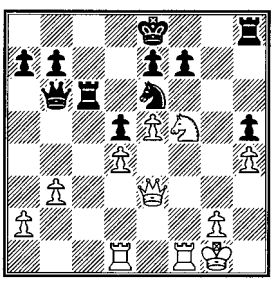
23.f4! ♗h6?

The first serious mistake. Black had to continue with 23...♕a6! 24.♕b1 (24.♕d2 f5!; 24.f5 ♕×d3 25.♖×d3 g×f5 26.♖×f5 ♗h6 27.♗×h6 ♖×h6 28.♘×h5 ♖c1+ 29.♔h2 ♖c2∞) 24...♖c3 25.♖f3 ♗h6 when chances should be about even, in an unclear position. It must be also noted that both players have consumed too much time to get to this position and both have started to be pressed by the relentless chess clock!

24.f5 ♗×e3+ 25.♕×e3

The difference is visual; the white queen is excellently placed near the weak black king.

25...g×f5 26.♘×f5 (D)



26...♖g8?

The second mistake. Black panicked and lost clear perspective that could help him to find the forced defense with 26...♖h7 27.♕d3 (27.♕g3 ♔f8 28.♕d3 ♕a6) 27...♘f8 although his position would be far from ideal; I would certainly prefer White.

27.♕f3 ♖c2?

A good lesson on how to avoid blunders looks like an urgent need for Black! There was nothing else other than 27...♘d8±.

28.♘e3!

This simple retreat which Black completely missed, wins for White. I resigned and I walked out with my opponent, discussing various other things than chess. While I felt badly for myself, I felt proud of my friend! Well, some friend! This was my first loss in about 15 months... **1-0**

FIDE World Cup 2007

In the fall of 2007 I was asked by ChessBase to comment on some games in the FIDE World Cup, a knock-out tournament that was to be held in the distant Siberian city of Khanty Mansiysk. My comments were written right after the end of each round and they were presented two or three hours later.

(236) El Gindy – Ponomariov
Khanty Mansiysk 2007
Nimzo-Indian Defense [E32]

1.d4 ♘f6 2.c4 e6 3.♘c3 ♗b4 4.♕c2 0-0 5.a3 ♗×c3+ 6.♕×c3 b6 7.♗g5 ♗b7 8.e3 d6

Another try is 8...c5 9.♘f3 h6 10.♗h4 c×d4 11.♘×d4 d5 12.c×d5 ♗×d5 13.f3 ♘bd7 14.e4 ♖c8 15.♕e3 ♗c4 16.♗×c4 ♖×c4 17.b3 ♖c8 18.0-0± Ivanchuk-Beliavsky, Batumi 1999.

9.♘e2

White has also played 9.f3 ♘bd7 10.♘e2 c5 (10...h6 11.♗h4 c5 12.♕b3 c×d4 13.♘×d4 d5 14.c×d5 ♗×d5 15.♕d1± Bareev-Volokitin, Warsaw 2002) 11.♕d3 h6 12.♗h4 d5 13.c×d5 e×d5 14.♘c3 ♖e8 15.♗e2 c×d4 16.♕×d4 ♕e7 17.♔f2 ♘e4+ 18.♕×e4 d×e4 19.♗×e7 e×f3 20.g×f3 ♖×e7 21.♖ad1 ♘e5 22.♖d4± Bareev-Volokitin, Warsaw 2002. [**same reference**]

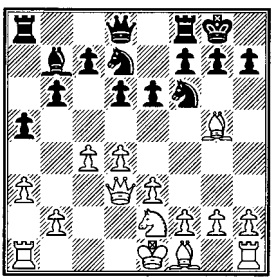
9...♘bd7

9...c5 10.d×c5 d×c5 11.♕c2 h6 12.♗h4 ♕e7 13.0-0-0 ♖d8 14.♖×d8+ ♕×d8 15.♘c3 ♘bd7 16.f3± was seen in Kramnik-Bologan, Dortmund 2003.

10.♕d3

The main alternative is 10.♕c2 c5 11.♖d1 (11.♘c3 c×d4 12.e×d4 ♕c7 13.♗d3 ♖ac8 14.0-0 ♗a6∞ Ivanchuk-Topalov, Linares 1999) 11...♕c7 (11...♖c8 12.♘c3 c×d4 13.♖×d4 ♖c5 14.♗h4 ♕a8 15.♗e2 d5 16.b4 ♖cc8 17.0-0∞ Bareev-Efimenko, Turin 2006) 12.♘c3 c×d4 13.♖×d4 a6 14.♗e2 h6 15.♗h4 ♗×g2 16.♖g1 ♗h3 17.♘e4∞/= Morozevich-Beliavsky, Heraklion 2007.

10...a5!? (D)



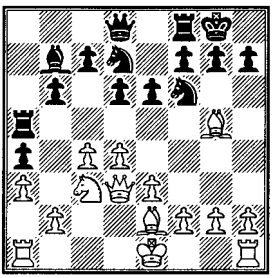
Black seems to be fond of either 10...♗a6 11.b4 (11.♘c3 d5 12.♕c2 ♗×c4 13.♗×c4 d×c4 14.♕a4 c5 [14...h6 15.♗h4 c5 16.♕×c4 c×d4 17.♕×d4 ♘c5 18.♗×f6 ♕×f6 19.♕×f6 g×f6 20.0-0-0

♖fc8= Ivanchuk-Kasparov, Rethymnon 2003] 15.♖d1 c×d4 [15...♕c8?! 16.0-0 ♘d5 17.♕×c4 ♘×c3 18.♕×c3 ♕b7 19.f3 h6 20.♗h4 ♖fc8 21.e4 c×d4 22.♕×d4 ♘f8 23.♖d2± Navara-Pelletier, Fuegen 2006] 16.♖×d4 ♕c7 17.0-0 ♖fc8 18.♖fd1 ♕c5 19.♗h4 ♕h5 20.♗×f6 ♘×f6 21.♖×c4= Shirov-Naiditsch, Sochi 2006) 11...c5 12.b5 ♗b7 13.♘c3 a6 14.f3 h6 15.♗h4 ♕e7 16.♗e2 c×d4 17.♕×d4 e5 18.♕d1 g5 19.♗g3 a×b5 20.♘×b5 d5 21.0-0± Kasparov-Grischuk, Rethymnon 2003 or 10...h6 11.♗h4 c5 12.♘c3 ♕e7 13.♖d1 (13.♗e2 c×d4 14.♕×d4 e5 15.♕d1 ♗×g2 16.♖g1 ♗c6 17.♗g4∞/= Bareev-Karpov, Cap d'Agde 2002) 13...♖fd8 14.♗e2 c×d4 15.♕×d4 ♘c5 16.♗×f6 ♕×f6 17.♕×f6 g×f6 18.♖d4 (18.♘b5 d5 19.c×d5 ♗×d5 20.♘c7 ♗b3 21.♘×a8 ♗×d1 22.♗×d1 ♖×a8 23.♗c2 ♖c8 24.♔d2 ♔f8= Bareev-Karpov, Wijk aan Zee 2003) 18...♘b3 19.♖h4 ♔g7 20.♔d1 d5 21.♔c2 ♘a5 22.c×d5 ♗×d5 23.♘×d5 ♖×d5 24.♖d1 ♖c8+ 25.♔b1 ♖cd8 26.♖×d5 ♖×d5 27.♔c2 ♖c5+ 28.♔d3± Bareev-Leko, Monte Carlo 2003. But the text move chosen by Ruslan is a good example of playing the opening according to the opponent's strength.

11.♘c3 a4 12.♗e2

The alternative is 12.♗h4 ♖a5 13.f3 ♕a8 (13...c5 14.♗e2 d5 15.c×d5 e×d5 16.0-0 ♖e8 17.♖fe1 ♗a6 18.♕d2 ♗×e2 19.♖×e2± Masse-Mikanovic, Toronto 2004) 14.♗e2 (14.0-0-0 d5 15.♕c2 ♖d8 16.♔b1 ½-½ Morovic Fernandez-Arencibia, Havana 2004) 14...d5 15.c×d5 ♗a6 16.♕d2 e×d5 (16...♘×d5 17.0-0 c5 18.♗×a6 ♕×a6 19.♘×d5 e×d5 20.d×c5 ♘×c5 21.♖ad1 ♘b3 22.♕d3 ♕×d3 23.♖×d3 ♖e8 24.♖fd1± Farrell-Aloma Vidal, Calvia 2007) 17.♗d1 ♗c4 18.♔f2 ♖e8 19.♖e1 b5 20.♔g1± Khismatullin-Kiriakov, Tomsk 2004.

12...♖a5 (D)



13.h4!?

A new move. Instead of transposing to the above comments on White's 12th move with 13.♗h4, the less ambitious 13.♗×f6 ♕×f6 14.0-0 ♕g5 15.f3 c5 16.♗d1 c×d4 17.e×d4 ♖fa8 18.♗c2 ♘f6 19.♕e2 d5 20.c×d5 ♘×d5 21.♘×d5 ♕×d5= as in Sutter-Pelletier, Switzerland 2005, has also been tried.

13...♕a8

13...♗×g2? 14.♖g1 ♗a8 15.0-0-0 gives White a strong attack and should be avoided.

14.♗×f6?!

This move has nothing in common with the previous one (13.h4!?). 14.f3 is preferable.

14...♘×f6 15.f3 e5 16.0-0-0?!

16.d5 looks safer.

16...e4! 17.♕c2

17.f×e4?! ♘×e4 can only be helpful to Black.

17...e×f3 18.g×f3 ♗×f3 19.♖hg1

Black has sacrificed a pawn to try to whip up an attack against the black king. But still it seems that Black's defense will not be broken easily and then the extra pawn will carry the day.

19...♗e4 20.♗d3 ♗g6 21.♖df1 ♕d8 22.♕g2 ♕e7 23.♖f3 ♔h8 24.e4?!

Black is doing fine even after 24.♗×g6 f×g6 25.e4 ♖h5 but White had to try it.

24...♖h5 25.♖f4 c5! 26.d5 ♖e5

Now Black is a healthy pawn-up, combined with a positionally better game as a result of the control of the dark squares and the weak white e4-pawn. It seems that another David-vs.-Goliath battle will soon finish in favor of the stronger side, contrary to history...

27.♖f5 ♘h5 28.♖×e5 d×e5?!

28...♕×e5 was rather natural and strong.

29.♕g4 ♘f4 30.♗c2 f6?!

30...♖a8 31.♔b1 h5 32.♕g3 ♔g8 was the right track for Black.

31.♖e1?!

White had to try 31.♗×a4 (31.♘×a4? ♗h5) 31...f5 32.e×f5 ♗×f5 33.♕g3∞.

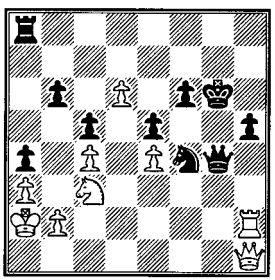
31...♖a8 32.♔d2 ♗h5 33.♕g3 ♗e8 34.♖g1 ♗d7 35.♗d1 g6 36.♗g4 ♔g7 37.♗×d7 ♕×d7

Black is clearly on his way to the win. A healthy extra pawn and a safe king. But several technical difficulties still have to be overcome.

38.♖f1 ♖f8 39.♖e1 h6?!

As 39...h5 40.♖g1 does not help much, I think that Black ought to open the f-file by 39...f5. Then he would have good chances to convert his material advantage.

40.♔c2 g5 41.♖h1 ♔g6 42.♖h2 h5 43.♔b1 ♔h6 44.♘d1 ♕h7 45.♘c3 ♕g6 46.♔a2 ♖a8 47.♖d2 g×h4 48.♕×h4 ♕g5 49.♕h1 ♕g4 50.♖h2 ♔g6 51.d6 (D)



51...♔f7?

Black's chosen plan with the expansion of his kingside pawns was a dangerous one. He should now have second thoughts about his strategy and go for a draw with 51...♖d8 52.♘d5 ♖×d6 (52...♘×d5 53.♖g2 ♘f4 54.♖×g4+ h×g4 55.♕h4 ♖×d6 56.♕×g4+ ♔f7 57.♕c8) 53.♘×f4+ ♕×f4 54.♖×h5 ♖d2 55.♖h8 ♖×b2+.

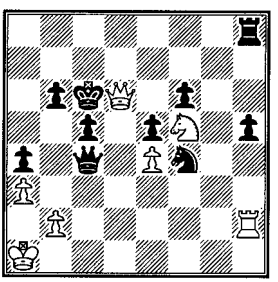
52.♘d5 ♖h8

52...♘×d5 53.c×d5 ♖h8 54.♖g2 ♕c8 55.♕f1 h4 56.♖g5!+−

53.♘e3?

White throws away his chances. He should continue with 53.♘×b6 ♕e6 54.♕d1 h4 55.♕×a4 ♕×d6 56.♘d5±.

53...♕e6 54.♘f5 ♕×c4+ 55.♔a1 ♔e8 56.d7+ ♔×d7 57.♕d1+ ♔c6 58.♕d6+ (D)



58...♔b5?

Again the "playing-the-opponent" strategy. Black had to be satisfied with a draw: 58...♔b7 59.♕d7+ ♔b8 60.♕d6+.

59.♕d7+ ♔a5 60.♘d6 ♕f1+ 61.♔a2 ♖a8 62.♖c2! ♕d3 63.♖c3

Also not bad also was the straightforward 63.♖×c5+ b×c5 64.♕c7+ ♔a6 65.♕c6+ ♔a5 66.♘b7#.

63...♕e2 64.♖c4

As mate follows, Black resigned. A painful defeat. White attacked the black king on the kingside but finally mated him on the queenside! **1-0**

The play-offs of the first knockout stage were held November 26th, 2007 in Khanty Mansiysk. I would like to mention the success of Mikhail Gurevich, who eliminated the respectable American grandmaster Gregory Kaidanov. Gurevich has been representing Turkey since 2005 and he has become an important figure in Turkish chess life. Just before the start of the play-offs, the Turkish Chess Federation President Mr. Ali Nihat Yazici phoned Mikhail Gurevich and stated his personal and the TSF's officials support and trust. As he was sure of Mikhail qualification, he also stated his opinion that against Adams (a forthcoming match) his chances would be rather good! Finally, I have to comment on the huge moral support of Turkish fans, which is really important for the psychology of any chessplayer. As nowadays I am working as Head Trainer of the Turkish men team and am (at the same time) in Antalya (Turkey) for the World Youth Chess Championship, I was able to have a unique position for insight into the above!

(237) Gurevich – Kaidanov
Khanty Mansiysk 2007
Queen's Gambit Declined [D30]

1.c4 e6 2.♘f3 d5 3.d4 ♘f6 4.e3

A modest but interesting way of handling a rapid game. White's strategy is simple: develop his pieces modestly but harmoniously and wait for his chances.

4...♗e7 5.b3 0-0

Another way to handle the opening is 5...c6 6.♗d3 ♘bd7 7.0-0 0-0 8.♗a3 ♗×a3 9.♘×a3 ♕e7 10.♘b1 e5 11.♘×e5 ♘×e5 12.d×e5 ♕×e5 13.♘d2 ♖d8 14.♕c2 h6= Khadempour-Boguszlavszkij, Budapest 2005.

6.Bd3

Some players have tried 6.♘bd2: 6...c5 7.♗d3 ♘c6 8.♗b2 d×c4 9.b×c4 b6 10.0-0 ♗b7 11.♖c1 (11.a3 ♕c7 12.♕e2 ♖fd8 13.♖ad1 ♖ac8 14.♖fe1 c×d4 15.e×d4 ♕f4∞ Riediger-Epding, Bayern 2005) 11...♖c8 12.♕e2 ♕c7 13.♖fd1 h6 14.♗b1 ♖fd8 Simantsev-Julin, Kiev 2004. The resulting positions are very similar to Queen's Indian Defense formations.

6...b6

A bit passive is 6...♘bd7 7.0-0 ♖e8 8.♗b2 c6 9.♘bd2 ♘f8 10.♘e5 ♗d6 11.f4± Fritz-Fehres, Tiefenbach 2004 but again Black can choose some of the above mentioned QID set-ups with 6...c5 7.0-0 c×d4 (7...b6 8.♗b2 ♘c6 9.♘bd2 c×d4 10.e×d4 d×c4 11.b×c4 ♗a6 12.♖c1 ♖c8 13.♕e2 ♘b4 14.♗b1 ♘bd5 15.♘e5± Malaniuk-Gyimesi, Warsaw 2005; 7...♘c6 8.♗b2 ♘e4 9.♘bd2 f5?! 10.♖c1 ♗d7 11.c×d5 e×d5 12.d×c5 ♘×c5 13.♗b1± Karayannis-Tassopoulos, Ermioni 2006) 8.e×d4 ♘c6 9.♗b2 (9.a3 d×c4 10.b×c4 b6 11.♗b2 ♗b7 12.♘bd2 ♕c7 13.♖c1 ♖ad8 14.♕e2 ♕f4 15.♖fe1∞ Herich-Dichmann, Munich 2006) 9...♘b4 10.♗e2 b6 11.a3 ♘c6 12.♗d3 ♗b7 13.♘bd2 ♖c8 14.♖c1 d×c4 15.b×c4 ♕d6 16.♕e2∞ Kuzubov-Laznicka, Polanica Zdroj 2007.

7.c×d5 e×d5

7...♘×d5 8.0-0 ♗b7 9.♗b2 ♘d7 10.♘bd2 c5 11.♕e2 offers White a tiny but pleasant opening advantage, as in Bustamante Montoni-Mata Gonzalez, Villahermosa 2001.

8.0-0 c5 9.♘e5 ♗b7

9...c×d4 10.e×d4 ♗b7 11.♗b2 ♘c6 12.♘d2 +=

10.♗b2 ♘bd7 11.♘×d7

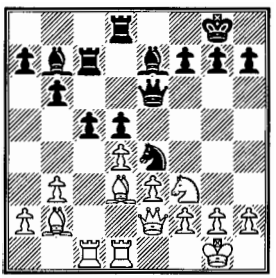
Now, after 11.♘d2 ♘×e5 12.d×e5 ♘e4 the presence of White's e-pawn and Black's c-pawn, allows the latter

to equalize.

11...♕×d7 12.♘d2 ♖ac8 13.♖c1 ♕e6 14.♕e2 ♖fd8 15.♖fd1

A double-edged position has appeared on the board, in which different pawn structures were to be seen in the near future.

15...♖c7 16.♘f3 ♘e4?! (D)



He should have tried 16...♗d6∞.

17.d×c5! ♖×c5

Worse was 17...b×c5?! 18.♘d4! ♕g6 (18...♕h6 19.♘f5) 19.f3 ♖cc8 20.♘b5 a6 21.♘a3 f5 22.f×e4 f×e4 23.♗b1±.

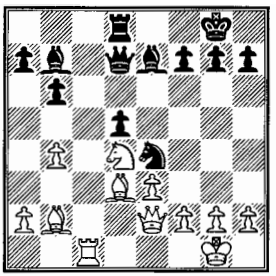
18.♘d4

Now White has obtained a pleasant advantage because of the weak black isolated d-pawn and his more harmoniously placed pieces.

18...♕c8?

The only logical follow-up for Black should be 18...♕d7 19.a3 ♗f6 20.b4 ♖×c1 21.♖×c1 ♖c8 22.♖×c8+ ♕×c8 23.g3±.

19.b4! ♖×c1 20.♖×c1 ♕b8 (D)



20...♕d7 21.♗b5! ♕d6 22.♘f5 +-

21.♗×e4!

Black's kingside has been left unprotected and White rushes to exploit this important but short-term advantage.

21...d×e4 22.♘f5 ♗×b4

There was no salvation anymore: 22...♗f8 23.♘h6+! ♔h8 (23...g×h6 24.♕g4+ ♗g7 25.♕×g7#) 24.♘×f7+ ♔g8 25.♘×d8; 22...♗d6 23.♕h5! (23.♕g4? ♗e5) 23...g6 (23...♗e5 24.♗×e5 ♕×e5 25.♘h6+) 24.♕g5 ♔f8 25.♗f6 ♖d7 26.♕h6+ ♔e8 27.♘g7+ ♔f8 28.♕×h7.

23.♕g4 g6 24.♕h4! ♕c7

A small trick as the alternative 24...♔f8 25.♗e5! ♕×e5 (25...♕a8 26.♕h6+ ♔e8 27.♘g7+) 26.♕×d8+ ♔e8 27.♕f6 g×f5 28.♖c7 ♔g8 29.♖×b7 was easily wining for White.

25.g4!

25.♖×c7?? ♖d1# was too much for Black to hope for.

25...♕×c1+ 26.♗×c1 ♖d1+ 27.♔g2 g×f5

Or 27...♖×c1 28.♕d8+ ♗f8 29.♘h6+ ♔g7 30.g5 ♖c6 31.♕d4+ f6 32.♕d7+ ♔h8 33.♕f7

28.♗b2 ♖d6 29.♗f6! ♖d1

29...f×g4 30.♗e7

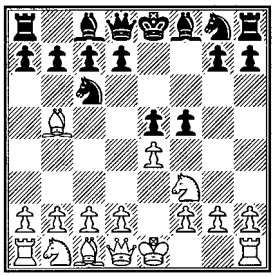
30.♕h6 1-0

The next game was one of the major surprises of the event:

(238) Macieja – Radjabov
Khanty Mansiysk 2007
Ruy Lopez [C63]
1.e4 e5 2.♘f3 ♘c6 3.♗b5 f5 (D)

The seldom-played Jaenisch Variation of the Ruy Lopez, probably prepared by Radjabov beforehand especially for this event.

4.d3



4.♘c3 is considered to be the main line but things are not so clear-cut and I am pretty sure that Radjabov would have come-up with some fresh ideas.

4...f×e4 5.d×e4 ♘f6 6.0-0 ♗c5

Unpleasant for Black is 6...♘×e4?! 7.♖e1 ♘f6 (7...d5 8.♘×e5 ♗c5 9.♕h5+ +– [9.♖f1? ♕d6∞ Pirklova-Havrdova, Svetla nad Sazavou 1994]) 8.♗×c6! (8.♘×e5 ♘×e5 9.♖×e5+ ♗e7 10.♕e2 +–) 8...b×c6 9.♘×e5 ♗e7 10.♕e2 ♗b7 11.♗g5 ±.

7.♗×c6 b×c6 8.♘×e5 0-0 9.♗g5

White's other options are 9.♘c3 and 9.♕e2.

9...♕e8

The most principled continuation. Of course Black's possibilities include 9...d6 10.♘d3 (10.♘×c6?! ♕e8∞/=) 10...♗b6 11.♘d2 (11.♘c3 ♗a6 12.♔h1 ♕e8∞/= van Blitterswijk-Hendriks, Dieren 2004) 11...♕e8 12.♗×f6 ♖×f6∞/= Gurevich-Jonkman, Cappelle la Grande 1994 or 9...♗a6 10.♘d3 ♕e7 (10...♗e7 11.♘d2 ♘×e4 12.♗×e7 ♕×e7 13.♘×e4 ♕×e4 14.♘c5 ♕c4 15.♘×a6 ♕×a6 16.♕×d7 ♕b6 17.b3 ♖ad8 18.♕e6+ ♔h8 19.♕e3± Sisniega-Burke, New York 1984) 11.♘d2 ♗d4 12.♘b3! (12.♘f3 ♕×e4 13.♖e1 ♕f5∞ Aginian-Dimovska, Dresden 2004) 12...♗b6 13.e5 ♗×d3 14.e×f6 g×f6 15.♕×d3 f×g5 16.c4 ±.

10.♗×f6

Somewhat naive would be 10.♘d3?! ♘×e4 11.♘×c5 ♘×g5∓.

10...♖×f6 11.♘d3 ♗d4!

11...♗b6 would transpose to the notes after 9...♕e8.

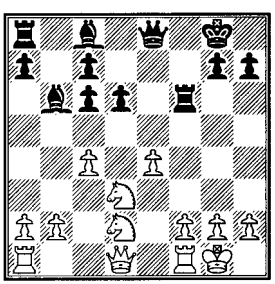
12.c3

Black achieves enough compensation after 12.♘d2 d6 13.♕e2 ♕g6 14.♔h1 ♗a6 15.♖ab1 ♖af8 because of his bishop pair and his active pieces, Spassky-Antunes, Thessaloniki 1988.

12...♗b6 13.♘d2 d6

13...♗a6 is interesting: 14.c4 (14.e5 ♖f8 15.c4 ♕g6 16.♕e2 d5 17.♘b4 ♗c8 18.c×d5 ♗h3 19.g3 ♗×f1 20.♖×f1∞ ½-½ Schaefer-Micic, Dortmund 1991) 14...♖h6 (14...d5?! 15.♕a4!± Shinkevich-Geller, Vladimir 2002; 14...♖d6 15.♕b3 ♗d4 16.c5+ ♖e6 17.♘f4 ♗×f1 18.♘×e6 ♕×e6 19.♕×e6+ d×e6 20.♔×f1 ♗×b2 21.♖b1±) 15.♕b3 ♗d4 16.♘f3 c5∞/=.

14.c4 (D)



Not much is offered by 14.♕e2 ♕g6! (14...♗a6 15.c4 ♕f7 16.b3± Bruzon Bautista-Gomez, Santa Clara 2000) 15.♔h1 ♗g4 16.f3 ♗e6∞/=.

14...♕g6?!

A new move but not a satisfactory one in my opinion. 14...♖h6 15.♖e1 (15.c5 ♗×c5 16.♘×c5 ♕e5 17.♘f3 ♕×c5) 15...♕e7 16.♘f1 ♕g5 17.♕d2 ♕h5∞/= was seen in Aginian-Shukurova, Elista 1998.

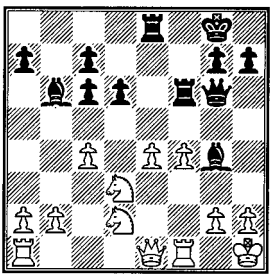
15.♔h1

A useful defensive move. Bad is 15.c5? ♗h3 16.♕b3+ ♔h8 17.♘f4 ♖×f4 18.♕×h3 ♗×c5 ∓.

15...♗g4 16.f3 ♗e6 17.f4

Although the text move is fine, 17.c5! also looks to be quite strong: 17...d×c5 (17...♗×c5 18.♘×c5 d×c5 19.f4 ±) 18.f4 c4 19.♘e5 ♕e8 20.♕c2 ±.

17...♗g4 18.♕e1 ♖e8 (D)



19.c5!

The thematic advance which allows White to gain the advantage.

19...♗×c5

Actually Black had no real choice, as the alternative capture with 19...d×c5 20.♘e5 ♕h5 21.♘×g4 ♕×g4 22.h3 ± was not acceptable...

20.♘×c5 d×c5 21.h3 ♗c8

21...♕h5 22.♕e3 c4 23.♖ae1 ±

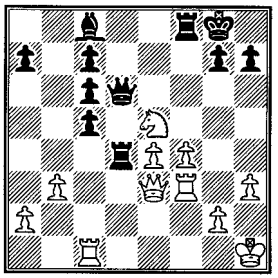
22.♕e3 ♕h6 23.♖f3 ♖d8 24.♘c4

White has gained a clear and long-term advantage. The material in quantitative terms is equal but just compare the white e- and f-pawns to the black c5- and c6-pawns. Then it is easy to understand the qualitative differences.

24...♖d4 25.b3 ♕h4 26.♖af1 ♖f8

26...♗a6 27.e5 ♖f8 28.e6 +/-

27.♘e5 ♕f6 28.♖c1 ♕d6 (D)



29.♘×c6!

A small combination that wins material.

29...♖d1+

29...♕×c6 30.♕×d4 c×d4 31.♖×c6 ♗b7 32.♖e6

30.♖×d1 ♕×d1+ 31.♔h2 ♕d6 32.♘e5

Also possible was 32.♘×a7 ♗a6 33.a4 ♕b6 34.♘b5 ♗×b5 35.a×b5 ♕×b5 36.e5 +-.

32...♗b7 33.♘d3 c4 34.b×c4 ♖e8 35.♘e5

The game is basically over and the rest was not really too interesting (although a bit of precision is needed of course!).

35...c5 36.♖f2 ♖d8 37.♖b2 ♗a8 38.♘f3 ♖f8 39.e5 ♕e6 40.♕×c5 ♕f5

40...♗×f3 41.g×f3 ♕f5 42.♕d5+ ♔h8 43.♕e4 ♕d7 44.f5 +-

41.♕e3 ♗e4 42.c5 ♗d5 43.♖d2 ♗a8 44.♘d4! ♕×f4+ 45.♕×f4 ♖×f4 46.♘e6 ♖c4 47.♘g5

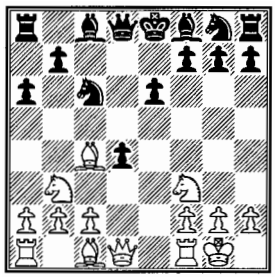
47.♖f2! was better but anyway Black was obliged to resign as after 47...♖f4 48.e6 there is no salvation. **1-0**

(239) Adams – Gurevich
Khanty Mansiysk 2007
French Defense [C07]

1.e4 e6 2.d4 d5 3.♘d2 c5 4.♘gf3 c×d4 5.e×d5 ♕×d5 6.♗c4 ♕d8

6...♕d6 is more common, but Mikhail Gurevich likes to explore rare lines.

7.0-0 ♘c6 8.♘b3 a6 (D)



Black alternatives are:

(a) 8...♗d7 9.♘b×d4 ♘×d4 10.♕×d4 ♗c6 11.♕e3 ♕c7 12.♘e5 ♗d6 13.♘×c6 b×c6 14.h3± Lipp-Bockius, Mainz 1995.

(b) 8...e5? 9.♖e1! f6 (9...♗d6 10.♘b×d4 ♘ge7 11.♘b5 ♗b8 12.♕×d8+ ♘×d8 13.♘×e5± Leick-Hemmerling, Germany 1992; 9...♕e7 10.♘b×d4 ♗g4 11.♘×c6 b×c6 12.h3 ♖d8 13.♕e2 ♗×f3 14.♕×f3+− Rezek-Kancel jak, Pula 2000) 10.♘f×d4± Fuentes-Carrion, Florida Valle 1993.

(c) 8...♗e7 9.♕e2 ♘f6 10.♖d1 ♕c7 11.♘b×d4 ♘×d4 12.♘×d4 a6 13.♗g5 0-0 14.♗h4 (14.♖e1 ♔h8 15.♖ad1 b5 16.♗d3± Forster-Schmehl, Bad Zwesten 2006) 14...♘e8 15.♗×e7 ♕×e7 16.♖d3 ♘d6 17.♗b3± Purdy-Martelli, Siegen 1970.

9.♕e2

Probably the most dangerous set-up for Black. White wishes to place his rook on d1, creating pressure against Black's queen along the d-file. There is not much in 9.♘b×d4 ♘×d4 10.♘×d4 (10.♕×d4 ♕×d4 11.♘×d4 b5 12.♗e2 ♗b7 Feher-Chernin, Hungary 2003) 10...♕c7 11.♕e2 ♘f6 12.♘f3 (12.♗g5 ♗d7 13.♘f3 ♗d6 14.♖fe1 0-0-0∞ ½-½ Szuk-Beliavsky, Hungary 1997) 12...♗d6 13.♖e1 b5 14.♗d3 ♗b7 15.a4 b4 16.♘e5 0-0= Ponomariov-Chernin, Bled 1999 or 9.♗f4 ♗d6 10.♕d2 ♘ge7 11.♘b×d4 ♗×f4 12.♕×f4 ♘×d4 13.♘×d4 ♘g6 14.♕e3 ♕e7 15.♘b3 0-0 16.♖ad1 ♗d7 17.♖d2 ½-½ Nisipeanu-Gurevich, Port Barcares 2005.

9...b5?!

This early expansion cannot be good as it weakens Black's queenside. Modest but sensible seems to be 9...♗d6 10.♖d1 ♘ge7 11.♘b×d4 ♘×d4 12.♖×d4!± (12.♘×d4 ♕c7 13.♗g5∞ Acs-Tolnai, Budapest 1996).

10.♗d3 ♘f6 11.♖d1 ♗e7 12.♘b×d4 ♘×d4 13.♘×d4 ♕c7 14.c3 ♗c5?!

Black did not like 14...0-0 15.a4! b4 16.c×b4 ♗×b4 17.♗g5± but probably he could not afford anything different. Moving the same piece twice before you complete your development is not advisable.

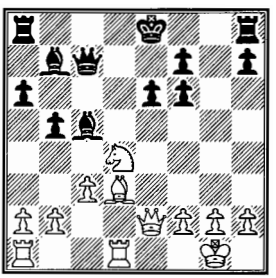
15.♗g5!

Now 15.a4?! does not work: 15...♗×d4 16.c×d4 b×a4 17.♖×a4 ♗b7∞.

15...♗b7?!

Perhaps Black had to try 15...♗×d4 16.c×d4 ♘d5 (16...♗b7 17.♗×f6 g×f6 18.♗e4 ♖c8 19.♗×b7 ♕×b7 20.d5±) 17.♖ac1 ♕d6 18.♗h4! 0-0 19.♗g3± and hope.

16.♗×f6 g×f6 (D)



17.♗e4!

Exchanging Black's most dangerous piece is a welcome strategy. At the same time the transfer of white's rook to the kingside (♖d3-g3/h3) is prepared.

17...♗×e4

If Black tries to castle queenside with 17...0-0-0, then 18.b4 ♗d6 (18...♗×d4 19.c×d4 ♔b8 20.a4) 19.a4! will ruin his defense.

18.♕×e4 0-0 19.♕h4! ♖fd8

Black is forced to give up his valuable f-pawn: 19...f5 20.♕g5+ ♔h8 21.♕f6+ ♔g8 22.♖d3 f4 23.♖h3+−; 19...♗e7 20.♖d3 f5 21.♕h6 ♗d6 22.♖h3+−.

20.♕×f6?!

More precise was 20.♖d3! ♖d5 21.♖h3 h5 22.♕×f6+−.

20...♗f8 21.♖d3 ♗g7 22.♕g5

22.♖g3? ♕×g3 23.♕×d8+ ♖×d8 24.h×g3 ♗×d4 25.c×d4 ♖×d4= was too naive for a player of Adams caliber.

22...♕e5 23.♕g4 ♖d6 24.♖g3 ♖c8 25.♕h4 ♔h8

Although Black faces many problems (a pawn down, a weak king) he should put up a more stubborn defense with 25...♖d7!? 26.a3 ♔h8±.

26.♕e7!

White's penetration with the queen will be proven decisive.

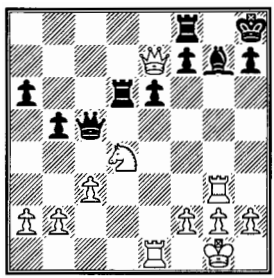
26...♕c5

I think that Black's last chance was 26...♕d5 27.♕×f7 ♗×d4 28.c×d4 ♕×d4 29.h3 ♕×b2 30.♖e1±.

27.♖e1

Also good is 27.♖d3 ♗×d4 28.c×d4 ♕c1+ 29.♖d1 ♕c7 30.♕f6+ ♔g8 31.♕g5+ ♔h8 32.♖d3±.

27...♖f8?! (D)



27...♗×d4 was forced: 28.c×d4 ♕×d4 29.♕×f7 ♕e5 30.♖ge3 ♕×b2 31.♖×e6 ♖×e6 32.♕×e6±.

28.♘×e6

Although the text move wins, 28.♖×g7! ♔×g7 29.♖e3 finishes the game in style.

28...♕e5

28...♖×e6 29.♖×e6 f×e6 30.♕×g7#

29.♖ge3!

A painful defeat for Gurevich as he had to pack and go back home. His handling of the opening needs to be re-examined. **1-0**

Conclusion

Work on your games and also on other important games. Analyze them in depth and try to understand on your own the critical moments and the way to improve your play.

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